DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 480 749 UD 035 865

TITLE	Portraits of Four Schools: Meeting the Needs of Immigrant Students and Their Families.
INSTITUTION	Yale Univ., New Haven, CT. Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy.
SPONS AGENCY	Rockefeller Foundation, New York, NY.
PUB DATE	2003-00-00
NOTE	43p.
AVAILABLE FROM	School of the 21st Century, Center in Child Development and Social Policy, Yale University, 310 Prospect Street, New Haven, CT 06511. Tel: 203-432-9944; Fax: 203-432-9945; e-mail: yale21C@yale.edu; Web site: http://www.yale.edu/ 21C.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Cultural Differences; Diversity (Student); Elementary Secondary Education; Family School Relationship; *Immigrants; Limited English Speaking; Minority Groups; Parent Participation; *School Community Relationship; *School Role
IDENTIFIERS	*School Based Services; School of the 21st Century

ABSTRACT

This report captures the essence of four schools in four different communities participating in a study on young immigrant children in U.S. schools. The schools were selected from a national network of schools implementing the Schools of the 21st Century (21C) program, which provides a range of services such as child care, health care, home visitations, and family support designed to enhance children's ability to do well academically. The report examines how the schools and communities addressed the needs of growing populations of immigrant students. Researchers and fieldworkers conducted case studies involving document reviews and extensive interviews with key stakeholders. They found that communities lacked the infrastructure to help immigrants. Far fewer support services were available compared to those available for earlier immigrants. The four 21C schools were already oriented toward families and communities, with family resource centers, child care, home visitations, parenting programs, after-school care, and evening community center activities. Although there were cultural barriers to parents' participation in the educational process, many participating educators had developed innovative ways to overcome such difficulties (e.g., meeting parents at the workplace). Portraits of the four schools provide historical perspectives, program descriptions, focal points, and challenges. (SM)

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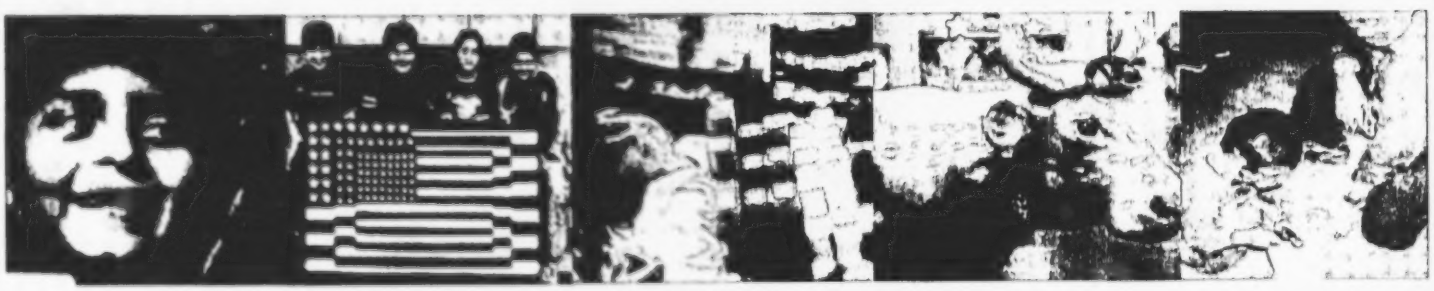
Portraits of Four Schools

Meeting the Needs of Immigrant Students and Their Families



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A STUDY CONDUCTED BY THE CENTER IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY, YALE UNIVERSITY

Background

The study on immigrant students in schools was carried out under the direction of Matia Finn-Stevenson, Associate Director, the Center in Child Development and Social Policy, Yale University. Participating in the study were Nicole Fedoravicius, Study Manager, Yale University, and Erica Lopez, Research Assistant, Yale University. Nicole Wise, a freelance journalist, participated in the data collection and writing of this report. Cynthia Wade, an independent documentary filmmaker, working under the direction of Vanessa Roth of Big Year Productions, filmed the interviews and focus groups. A follow-up to the study is a book on the topic, currently in progress.

THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

The study was supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, a knowledge-based, global foundation with a commitment to enrich and sustain the lives and livelihoods of poor and excluded people throughout the world. The Foundation seeks to identify, and address at their source, the causes of human suffering and need. Under the theme of Working Communities, the Foundation works to build communities that work—with enhanced opportunity, resilience and security for poor and marginalized people living in major metropolitan areas of the United States. It promotes public policies and practices that can foster decent jobs, affordable housing, quality public schools and fuller participation in decision-making processes that affect people's lives.

THE CENTER IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY, YALE UNIVERSITY

The Center in Child Development and Social Policy, Yale University, was founded in 1977 by Edward Zigler to bring current research knowledge about child development into the policy arena, with the goal of improving the lives of America's children and families through informed social policy. To accomplish this goal, the Center analyzes current and proposed policies affecting children and families; conducts policy-related research; conveys to policy-makers and the public what is known about the developmental needs of children; trains young researchers in the various processes through which policy decisions are made; and develops and promotes large-scale initiatives geared to solving problems of children and families.

One of the major initiatives of the Center is The School of the 21st Century (21C) program. Developed by Edward Zigler and Matia Finn-Stevenson, 21C, known in some states as Family Resource Centers, is a school-based model providing child care and family support services from the birth of the child to age 12. The core components of 21C are: guidance and support for parents, preschool programs, before- and after-school and vacation care for school-age children, health education and services, networks and training for community child care providers, and information and referral services for families. There are 1,300 21C schools around the country. The Center in Child Development and Social Policy, Yale University, provides 21C schools with technical assistance and training on implementation and coordinates the 21C National Network.

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Acknowledgements

This report captures the essence of four schools in four different communities participating in the study on young immigrant children in United States schools. We are grateful to the many people --educators, government officials, and representatives from community-based organizations and businesses, and the many students and families -- who gave of their time for interviews, phone calls and filming so that others may learn from their experiences.

Green Bay, Wisconsin, and Howe Elementary, Barbara Beibel, Green Bay Diocese Catholic Charities (GBDCC); Mary Binns, parent; Lisa Clark, Family Resource Center; the Curiel family; Crystal Delwiche, GBDCC; Ed Dorff, principal; Andrea Gilles, Multicultural Center; Mary Ann Hitch, social worker; Paul F. Jadin, mayor of Green Bay; Kathleen Klaus, GBDCC; Brian Marchant, teacher; Laurie Laurent, Even Start; Even Start Morning and Evening Groups; the Reyes family; Paul Linzmeyer, Bay Towel; Gloribel Limpert, Migrant Workers Office; Father Ribbons, GBDCC..

Leadville, Colorado, and The Center/Pitts Elementary, Bette Bullock, superintendent, Lake County Schools; Paula Canning, principal; Sally Glasser, teacher; Mayela Guerrero, Full Circle, Inc.; Emily May, teacher; Leticia Mota, parent; Connie Long, Head Start Director; Eva Tolsen, Lake County Schools; Charles O'Leary, Lake County; Rosemary Pettus, Workforce Development; Alice Pugh, Full Circle, Inc.; Ester Soto Advocates, Inc., and Abel Velasquez, pastor.

Stamford, Connecticut, and The International School at Rogers Magnet, Eugene Campbell, Connecticut Training & Employment, Inc.; Sam Cingueri, Grade A Supermarket; Cathy Cummings, principal; Marjori Delva, Rogers School Community Center Organization (ROSCCO); Lupe Dauplaise, Stamford Public Schools; Mary Ginese, preschool teacher; Maritza Garcia, Stamford Public Schools; Cathy Guinta, Stamford Public Education Foundation; Monica Hoherchak, PTO; Alex Martinez, Stamford Public Schools Board of Education; Lois Mattaboni, Links teacher/parent; Roz Nessin, Adult and Continuing Education; Christina Ramoglou, ROSCCO; Emilio Revolus, Haitian Community Center; Rev. Jean Ridley, Haitian American Catholic Center; Michael Rinaldi, assistant principal; Marcia Velez, Family Centers, Inc.; Larry Welsh, Links teacher/parent; Jennifer Williams, social worker; and the Xantos family.

Columbus Junction, Iowa, and Wilma Sime Roundy Elementary, the Ayala family; Diane Bohling, volunteer coordinator; Jeannette Brockert, Stork's Nest; Georgina Buendias-Cruz, family contact; Eva Garcia, IBP; Hector Garrido, New Iowans Center; Rosa Mendoza, Diversity Services; Jessica Orr, teacher; Carmen Porras, parent; Maria Ricaurte Romza, social worker; Dan Vogeler, principal; Father Bernie Weir; and Seth Wenger, 21st Century Coordinator.

Special thanks also to many other parents and educators who participated in focus groups; to Valerie Vergato Zielinski for her timely and thorough administrative support; and to Fred Frelow, the Rockefeller Foundation, for providing support throughout the study.

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Foreword

The Center in Child Development and Social Policy, Yale University, is pleased to present this report as part of its study on young immigrant children in school. The idea for the study evolved during discussions between Fred Frelow, Associate Director, Working Communities Program, Rockefeller Foundation, and Matia Finn-Stevenson, Associate Director, the Center in Child Development and Social Policy, Yale University. The discussions focused on the increase in recent years in the number of immigrant children attending public schools in the United States and the lack of research on the topic. Much of what we know about immigrant students is from research on previous generations of immigrants. Although recent immigrants have the same aspirations for a better life and education for their children that previous generations have had, circumstances are very different today. We have witnessed in the past few years not only a very large influx of immigrants, but also an extraordinary diversity in the nationality and backgrounds they represent. Also new is that immigrants—following jobs—are settling in communities with little or no recent history with immigrant populations. These communities tend to have immigrants who are recent arrivals to the United States, have limited English, and have very low income.

For many of the nation's schools, but especially the schools in "new growth" communities, that is, communities experiencing a rapid and unprecedented growth in the number of newly arrived immigrants, the demographic reality means not only a sudden increase in the size of the student body, but also a vast change in the makeup of the population, evident in the number of low income and limited English proficiency (LEP) students. As a result, schools are facing numerous challenges, among these the need for bilingual teachers and staff who can reach out and arrange for various services the families may need.

Although statistical studies on the new wave of immigration have emerged since the publication of the 2000 Census, these don't tell us how the schools and communities are coping with increased enrollments and changing demographics. The schools are taking on more than just the provision of academic instruction. They are on the front lines as it were, helping immigrant families to adapt and acculturate to life in a new community. As Americans, we have always helped new immigrants. However, in previous years there were provisions such as settlement houses to address this need. Today, many immigrants settle in small, rural communities with limited resources, so the school becomes the center of life for immigrant families, the place for their children's education and also the most likely place where they can find information and someone who can assist them on issues related to housing, employment and health. These are issues that are outside of the traditional mission of the school, but they have to be addressed if children are to achieve academic success.

With grant support from the Rockefeller Foundation, we began a series of studies on young immigrant children, from birth to age eight, in the school. We focus on schools' role in serving young children for two reasons: because of the importance of the early childhood years and the significance of these years to later school achievement, and because recently arrived immigrants tend to be families with very young children, often ages five and under. This report is one of the products of our study where we set out to document how schools are undertaking multiple roles to address the needs of young immigrant children and their families. Using a case study method, we examined four schools in four very different communities, each having substantial numbers of immigrant children.

The schools were selected from a national network of schools implementing the School of the 21st Century (21C), a program we developed. 21C is a school-based program addressing the needs of children and families from the birth of the child through age 12. It is currently operating in 1,300 schools throughout the country. These schools provide a range of services such as child care, health, home visitations and family support designed to enhance children's ability to do well academically.

The four schools participating in the study are: Howe Elementary, Green Bay, Wisconsin; The Center/Pitts Elementary School, Leadville, Colorado; The International School at Rogers Magnet, Stamford, Connecticut; and Wilma Sime Roundy Elementary School, Columbus Junction, Iowa.

As you will see in the pages that follow, these four schools are exemplary in their dedication to doing all that can be done to ensure that children get off to a good start and begin school ready to learn and profit from instruction. They embrace new immigrant families in the same way that they embrace all families. They work with various community-based organizations that provide social and other services to support the optimal development of children. This report documents the strategies and effective practices the schools have used in working with immigrant families. It also addresses the realities and challenges that confront the schools.

With schools now having to implement the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, the impact of immigration and its implications to schools and communities are recognized as

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policy issues that need to be addressed. An understanding of the context within which schools are working is an essential first step in the policy process. We encourage the use of this report to gain insight into policy changes and programs that may help schools address the needs of all children, including immigrant children, and ensure academic success.

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Introduction

In the United States of America, every child is entitled—in fact, required—to receive an education, regardless of citizenship status. That mandate, so fundamentally American, so vital to our national vision of providing freedom, security and opportunity to individuals fleeing oppression and looking to make a better life than is possible in their home country, presents both an extraordinary opportunity and challenge to our schools. As we work with children to prepare them for the future and with families in equipping them to live productive lives, our educational institutions sit squarely at the center of our country's efforts to support and facilitate success for a very large and incredibly diverse influx of immigrants, both legal and illegal.

The School of the 21st Century

This is most especially true of one particular type of school, namely, the School of the 21st Century (21C), developed at the Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University. This community school model addresses the needs of children and families, from the birth of the child through age 12. Introduced in 1987 and now in place in 1,300 communities around the United States, 21C embodies a vision of the school as the heart of the community. In 21C schools, the education of the child remains the core mission, with educators making a commitment to work with others in the community to provide family support services to ensure the children's academic success. These schools work to reach all children, from infancy to middle childhood; to assist all families in meaningful ways; and to bring together the resources of the entire community for the benefit of everyone.

Bringing together a variety of programs and services in one place, 21C provides not only education, but also various family support services. Included in 21C schools are several core components. All-day, year-round child care provides a safe and supportive environment for children ages three and four while their parents are working. Before- and after-school and vacation care is available for children ages five through 12. Support and guidance are offered to all families through home visitation programs from the birth of the child through age three. With parent educators to guide them, parents learn about their children's development and ways that they, as parents, can enhance the children's ability to learn. Home visitation programs also provide opportunities to identify potential developmental and learning problems the children may have and advise parents about appropriate services for the children. Additional services provided by 21C schools include health and nutrition, adult education, especially for parents wanting to learn English or complete high school, and information and referral services to ensure that those in need know where to turn for assistance. Because schools implement the 21C model on the basis of the needs and resources of their particular community, 21C schools differ from one another. However, all 21C schools share a commitment to provide good quality programs and they have as their overall goal the optimal development of all children.

The Study on Immigrant Children in School

In this report we present findings of a case study on immigrant children in 21C schools. The study, which has come to be known as *The Responsive Schools Initiative: The Heart of the Community*, was funded by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. It examines how four very different 21C schools in four very different communities around the country are addressing the needs of immigrant families. The communities—Green Bay, Wisconsin; Leadville, Colorado; Stamford, Connecticut; and Columbus Junction, Iowa—were chosen as representative of rural, suburban and urban communities. Using the information we gathered in the study, we have prepared—and are presenting in this report—portraits of the schools showing the opportunities and challenges—economic, environmental and educational—in each school and each community.

We began this study in 2001, motivated by the awareness that many 21C schools have experienced a notable increase in the number of immigrant children. This is reflective of a national trend. The proportion of children in the United States who are immigrant or who were born to immigrant parents has grown by close to 50 percent in the past decade, compared to 10 percent growth in the number of native-born Americans. An analysis of Census and other data indicates that immigrant children make up the larger share of the students of elementary and secondary schools and that many of these children have a limited knowledge of English.[1] These developments, however, have been ignored. It was not until the publication of the 2000 Census data and, a little later, the enactment of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, that there has been consistent news coverage and, as a result, increased policy and research awareness of the nature and impact of current immigration trends on our communities and educational system.

The United States has a long history of welcoming immigrants. Immigrants today share some similarities with those from previous generations; they too, have come to

[1]Fix, M. & Passel, J. (2003). U.S. Immigration—Trends and Implications for Schools. Presented at the National Association for Bilingual Education NCLB Implementation Institute. New Orleans, LA, January 28–29.

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America seeking to better their lives and find employment. However, the current wave of immigration presents unprecedented challenges. Not only are we witnessing a large influx of immigrants, but this wave of immigration is also noted for its extraordinary diversity in national background. The previous large wave of immigration that took place in the early 1900s included immigrants who were primarily from European backgrounds. Today's immigrants are from many different countries. You will see in the pages that follow that in one of the schools participating in the study, children speak 17 different languages; in the district as a whole there are students speaking 54 different languages. Immigrants today also come from varied socioeconomic backgrounds and although many are educated and can support themselves, others have limited education and are poor. Many are legal immigrants, some are here illegally, and there are also those who are here as refugees.

Also different today is the community's ability to assist immigrants. Although it was believed that the new wave of immigrants are drawn to large cities, as was true in previous generations, it has become apparent in the past several years (but was already known to teachers and school administrators) that large numbers of immigrants today pursue employment in rural and small communities, which are rarely prepared to absorb them. The immigration patterns in large cities are changing, too, reflecting a diversity that poses numerous challenges to educators.

The Significance of the Study

Schools around the country, not just those implementing the 21C model, are experiencing an increase in the number of immigrant students. However, in this study we focus on 21C schools since these provide not only academic instruction but also various support services children and families may need. These schools are prepared to provide programs and services beginning at birth and throughout the early childhood years. The early years represent an important developmental period and the children's experiences during these years impact on later success in school. So important are these early years, that as a nation, we are thinking of ways we can provide preschool to all children, so that they enter school ready to learn.

Despite the critical importance of the early years, much of the research on immigrant children focuses on older children.[2] The studies are showing, for example, that among immigrants who are successful in their profession and have a career, life can be difficult for the children. For children whose parents are in low-paying, dead-end jobs and have little if any education, life is even more difficult, with a large percentage of them experiencing depression and negative self-concept.[1] Although these findings illuminate the vulnerabilities of immigrant children ages nine and older, we do not know about the mental health of younger immigrant children or their experiences. The lack of research attention to young immigrant children is notable, since the largest growth in immigrant families is among those with young children. It leaves unanswered some important policy questions: Do immigrant families have access to, and do they participate in, various social, health, and other services available to eligible native-born Americans? Do their children enter school ready to learn? Do educators and other professionals have resources to effectively deal with young immigrant children and their families? How do communities deal with the costs and stresses associated with the large increase in the number of immigrants? How do the many schools now serving young

Immigration Trends: Implications for Schools

In an analysis of immigration data, researchers at the Urban Institute provide statistics on immigrant population trends and their implication for schools. Included among their findings:

1. The children of immigrants represent 20 percent of all children in the U.S., representing 10.5 million students in grades K–12. Children born in the U.S. to foreign-born parents represent 14 percent of all students (7.5 million).
2. The foreign-born and U.S.-born children of immigrants represent 25 percent of all low-income children.
3. 40 percent of foreign-born children have limited English proficiency (LEP). This LEP population grew by 52 percent between 1990 and 2000 from 14 million to 21.3 million.
4. Half of LEP children attend schools in which a third or more of their classmates have LEP, meaning students are often concentrated at the same schools.
5. The immigrant population in new growth states is disproportionately made up of recent arrivals, with almost 60 percent having arrived in the 1990s, most since 1995. Recent arrivals have been found to have lower incomes and limited English language skills. The term "new growth states" refers to states experiencing an increase in the number of recent immigrants. Included are twenty-two states located in a wide band in the middle of the country (Rocky Mountain, midwest, and southeastern states).
6. Estimates propose that there are 1.4 million undocumented children, about 1.1 million of whom are age 5 to 19 years.

Source: Fix, M., Passel, J. (2003). U.S. Immigration—Trends and Implications for Schools. Presented at the National Association for Bilingual Education NCLB Implementation Institute. New Orleans, LA. January 28– 29.

[2] Traditionally, the research on immigrant children focused on older students in secondary school or college. More recent studies are taking a look at students in the upper elementary grades. An example of such studies is California Tomorrow (2002). Access and Equity in After School Programs. Oakland, CA: Author. Another example is the research of Marcello and Carola Suarez-Orozco of The Harvard Immigration Project, who are conducting a five-year study following immigrant children from age nine to fourteen.

[1] Suarez-Orozco, M., and Suarez-Orozco, C. (2001). Children of Immigration. Harvard University Press.

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children address the needs of immigrant children and families?

Study Goals

In this study, we sought to answer some of these and other questions. Our goal was to discover how the schools and communities address the needs of a growing population of immigrant students. Knowing that 21C schools, by their very nature, have a commitment to reach out to all children and parents, we sought to find and document exemplary practices that may inform other educators. We also set out to identify challenges the schools and communities encounter.

A team of researchers and fieldworkers spent several months conducting a case study in each of the four communities. This involved a review of documents as well as extensive interviews with a range of school and community leaders, including school administrators, teachers, board of education personnel and representatives from social services and other agencies in the community. Immigrant parents and some of their children were also interviewed, and they tell, in their own words, how life goes for them—at work, at home and in school. Since immigrants follow jobs and settle in communities where they find employment, it is clear that businesses contribute to the changing makeup of the school. As part of the study, we met with and interviewed executives, managers and workers, and documented ways that schools and businesses are working together, as well as instances where better relationships between business and schools are recommended.

During the pilot stage of the study, it became apparent that what educators, community leaders and the immigrants themselves had to tell us was dramatic. We did not feel we could do it justice using traditional interview methods. We were fortunate to be able to secure the assistance of a documentary producer and professional film crew who filmed the schools and communities. The film transcript provided the database from which this report was prepared. Since the film transcript is already available, we will be seeking funds in the coming months in the hope of producing a video documentary on the study.

What We Found

Each of the communities we studied has its own history and unique circumstances, its own strengths and limitations. But taken together, a picture emerges of dedication in the face of challenge and, especially, concern for and commitment to meet the needs of those newly arrived to the country.

Among our findings is the community's lack of infrastructure to help immigrants. Far fewer support services are available today than was true in the case of earlier immigrations. During the previous large wave of immigration, settlement houses existed in major urban centers to provide much of the necessary assistance and support families required to begin life in their new country. Today there are agencies committed to filling some of this need, but in many communities, the school serves as the central resource for families. In addition to educating children, schools today also attend to children's health and mental health needs and to the needs of their parents for various forms of assistance essential for people who are unfamiliar with our language, culture and customs.

As Schools of the 21st Century, the four schools participating in this case study are already oriented toward families and the community. In accordance with the 21C model, each of the schools has a family resource center,[4] with child care for preschoolers, home visitations, parenting programs and after-school care. Each of the schools also functions in the evening hours as a community center, hosting classes, activities and workshops within the school building. There is in place a network of relationships with local businesses and community-based organizations. The commitment to improving life for students and families while also providing a quality education is strongly felt by administrators, teachers and staff. So there is much that is already "right" in every one of these schools.

Yet the schools also face enormous difficulties. While each community has its own story, they share certain challenges. For example, there are cultural barriers to parental involvement in the educational process—linguistic, academic, and practical issues relating to work schedules and child care that are cited by officials in virtually every school we visited. The high school dropout rate among Hispanics has soared in the last decade. This is noted in various other studies[5] as well as the one we describe here, leaving educators concerned that despite their best efforts, so much more needs to be done for the children. We also found that the fact that many immigrants are undocumented poses numerous problems. Families may not enroll in free- or reduced-lunch programs, or partake of other services and supports they are entitled to, for fear of detection. The families are vulnerable to abuse by employers. Though most immigrants are attracted to the promise of a rosier financial future in the United States, the reality is that their standard of living may drop precipitously. Housing and health care may be unaffordable and unavailable. And in many cases, the family structure is threatened—there is a higher than usual incidence of domestic violence in immigrant homes,

[4] Indeed, in Connecticut, Kentucky, and several other locations, 21C is known as a Family Resource Center.

[5] Some immigrant students do well in school but many others do not, eventually dropping out of school, a point underscored in Ruiz-de-Velasco, J., Fix, M., and Chu Clewell, B. (2000). Overlooked and Underserved: Immigrant Students in US Secondary Schools. Washington, DC: Urban Institute. Because the communities included in the case study have recent immigrants who have limited English proficiency and low income, a large percentage of them do not complete high school.

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and many parents feel that they "lose control" of their children once they become acculturated to life in their new country.

However, we also found that there are many positive aspects of immigrants' lives and examples of families benefiting from, as well as contributing to the schools. Many of the educators participating in the study shared with us innovative ways to overcome the difficulties in getting parents to become involved with schools, such as meeting parents at their workplace. They have also shared with us some of the ways that they try to help immigrant children have a sense of mastery and pride. For example, they have the students teach their own language to others in the school or they organize mime clubs, where everyone communicates, but in ways other than spoken language.

About the Report

We organized the report to provide a portrait of each of the schools participating in the study. We included in each portrait:

- **A historical perspective** on each school and community.
- Description of the **21C programs included** in the school.
- **Focal Points**, which describe unique aspects of the school's work with immigrant students.
- **Challenges** the schools are facing.

Also included in each of the portraits are quotes from educators, community and business leaders and the immigrants themselves, both parents and the children, who—in their own words—provide insight into their lives and how the schools are supporting them. While each of the portraits that follow provides insight into the communities we studied, our conclusions draw effective practices common to all four schools. It is our hope that future policy can be written with an eye toward what works, and what remains to be done.

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Howe Elementary
Green Bay, Wisconsin

A World Community: Making Connections One Person at a Time

Confronting challenges head-on has created a clear vision of what diversity and "world community" mean within Howe Elementary. At Howe, it means a warm welcome to all parents and students and strong partnerships with community-based organizations, businesses and government agencies. Whether parents are emigrating from Laos, Mexico or from urban cities such as Milwaukee, Howe's system helps families find their niche and serves as a place where the entire community converges to nurture and provide resources, skills and services for families.

A visitor to Howe Elementary School in Green Bay, Wisconsin walks directly into a bright, spacious foyer, hung with a colorful rainbow of flags from many—but not all—the nations represented in the student population of the school, some ancestral but many first-generation. A sign in the foyer welcomes visitors to "Howe School: A World Community." The walls of the main office are hung with bright artwork that celebrates the multi-cultural center that Howe Elementary School takes pride in having become.

By virtue of the neighborhoods it serves, Howe Elementary School—built in 1912 and renovated in 1996—has become one of the most ethnically and economically diverse schools in the city's educational system. While the board of education never handed down an official mandate for the school to serve "the world community in Green Bay," principal Ed Dorff—a warm and friendly Wisconsin native who grew up in a community very similar to what the Howe neighborhood has become—acknowledges that under his leadership, Howe has embraced the mission of celebrating diversity and serving as a helpful resource to all families, most especially those who have come to Green Bay in search of a better life for themselves and their children.

And there are many, because Green Bay does indeed offer opportunity and an excellent quality of life. With a population of 102,313, approximately 13 percent foreign-born, Green Bay is a small city with the welcoming attitude of a big town. Even when the national economy is uncertain, the local economy is strong, and unemployment is impressively low, hovering in the area of two percent. There is little crime, and no real "wrong" side of the tracks—which literally run right through town, mostly serving to bring livestock to the meat-packing plants that employ a large number of the city's immigrant workforce. There are many churches in the downtown area but no skyscrapers. The cost of living is low, and even the most modest neighborhoods

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are pleasant—with wide streets lined with small, tidy, wood-frame houses, and children and dogs playing outdoors. The city also boasts affluent neighborhoods, upscale restaurants, good parks, professional sports and a cultural center.

Historical Perspective

Up until late in the twentieth century, Green Bay was a fairly typical midwestern city with many families of German, French and Belgian origin. In the 1970s, Green Bay welcomed several hundred Hmong families, resettled under the supervision of The Immigrant and Refugee Settlement Services of The Catholic Charities of the Green Bay Diocese, an agency which still serves as the primary resource for information and assistance to immigrant families. In the 1990s, there began another wave of immigration, this time primarily Hispanic families from Central America and Mexico, coming to work in the meat-packing industry for Packerland and American Foods Group. Other major employers of immigrant workers are Georgia Pacific and Bay Towel, a commercial laundry.

According to estimates from the 2000 Census data, there are currently approximately 8,000 Hispanics living in Green Bay and approximately 4,000 Hmong and Lao residents. The African American population (1,738) is also growing, as families flee the dangers of Chicago and Milwaukee for a safer, quieter life in Green Bay. But those numbers are far lower than the ones provided by the office of Paul Jadin, mayor of Green Bay. Jadin believes that the city is home to as many as 14,000 Hispanics, between 5,000 and 9,000 Hmong, and he estimates that the total population of African Americans has increased from less than two percent 25 years ago, to more than ten percent today.

When a community changes so dramatically, so quickly, the impact reverberates through many sectors of society. Without advance warning, few communities are prepared with policies that have built-in training and development for teachers and education professionals, or for the community at large.

It made sense, in the view of Jadin and other city government officials, to take those issues to the employers and ask for help. "Those kinds of things have changed drastically [in the intervening years] because we got the CEOs together with the school district, and so forth," says Jadin. "We are having the corporations participate financially in a lot of this. And [maybe] most importantly, getting the community itself involved in some of the solutions to these things. We're [trying to get] the bigoted segment of the population to move at least to ambivalence, and to get the ambivalent to move to acceptance. And to do that, we've got to be able to show that we are indeed recognizing, first of all, that there are problems associated with all this, and second, that we are addressing the problems."

Involvement of the entire community has led to the shaping of policy within Green Bay that, among other things, gives a voice to each segment of the immigrant population by setting up neighborhood resource boards with representatives from each neighborhood association, as each ethnic group tends to live together. There are Mayor's Advisory Councils on Hispanic issues and Hmong issues, and liaisons within the police department as well. A new multicultural center in the downtown area addresses what Jadin calls "the whole package."

Howe school principal Ed Dorff also considers American families who have relocated to the area to be immigrants, in the sense that they are "coming to Green Bay to make a better life for themselves. There are some dramatic shifts in coming from the inner city of Milwaukee or the inner city of Chicago to Green Bay, Wisconsin. And there are some special needs that we notice with these kids and these families. So in a sense we consider them immigrant families—even though the families have been in America longer than my own family, in many cases."

"When I took office in 1995, it became apparent that the school system wasn't ready to deal with the fact that we had 200 new employees at Packerland, and because of that, we may have had 500 new students in our school system who needed bilingual education. The school system had to scurry to bring in new teachers. We weren't prepared to deal with putting large families, even two families at a time, into one apartment in buildings near our downtown. We weren't prepared to deal with even things as mundane as traffic stops—you know, how our police officers communicate with someone who isn't clear as to how to travel through Green Bay."

—Mayor Paul Jadin

School of the 21st Century Programming

A School of the 21st Century, with all its component elements including Head Start preschool and before- and after-school child care programs, Howe Elementary School is organized to support the entire family as it educates children. The building and its adjacent Family Resource Center, renovated with a generous donation from the local corporation Schreiber Foods, serves as a true community center and a significant milestone in Howe's history. The acquisition and development of the Howe Neighborhood Family Resource Center was made a reality in the late 1990s by a group of local women calling themselves the "Screaming Mothers," who came together to protest the existence of a shop selling cigarettes and alcohol right next door to the elementary school.

Though they lost that particular battle, the group launched an initiative to open a facility to provide support and programming for families in the area. Since the neighborhood includes many immigrants, much of its focus, therefore, became helping them to assimilate, and to live well and comfortably in the neighborhood. In just under a year, the group raised $780,000, purchased and renovated a

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21C Programs Include:

The Early Bird Program is a child care center open from 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. each day. The goal is to provide a safe, structured environment for children whose parents are working shifts. This program was designed as a direct —and successful—attempt to reduce truancy and tardiness caused by the fact that parents who work long hours were leaving their young children to get themselves off to school each morning.

The Play Group Programs include a general play group, to which anyone and everyone is welcome; a Hispanic play group; and a new play group for children who are hearing-impaired. All play groups are aimed at enhancement of school readiness skills in children soon to enter kindergarten, working to "teach the parent to teach the child." (At first, recounts Lisa Clark, the program wasn't accomplishing this goal: "The families weren't socializing and we felt like we were taking care of the children and teaching them. It took us a little while to get the moms to sit and do crafts and activities with their kids—it is funny to say, but it began to work when we took all the adult chairs out of the room, and got the moms sitting with their children at the little chairs.")

Even Start is a program designed to help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving the educational opportunities of the nation's low-income families by integrating early childhood education, adult literacy, and/or adult basic education, and parenting education into a unified family literacy program. Operated in partnership with several agencies, including the Literacy Council, NWTC (a regional community college) and Compass Child Care, the Green Bay program provides child care while the adults attend English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for 90 minutes. Parents and children then come together for a group activity. The daytime program meets from 9 a.m. to 12 noon, three days a week; the evening program meets twice a week, also for three hours.

Head Start is a federally funded, all-day program providing preschool with additional wrap-around child care for children between the ages of three and five.

After-School Child Care, run in partnership with different agencies throughout the Green Bay area, including the Boys & Girls Club, the YMCA and the Green Bay Parks and Recreation Department, provides structured activities and homework help for children weekdays from 2:30 to 5:00 p.m.

Parents As Teachers is a home visitation program for families with children up to the age of three and works to invest parents in their children's educational efforts by educating them and teaching parenting skills.

Adult Computer Classes are offered for the Hmong population.

Senior Programs include Bingo and computer and Internet instruction for the elderly.

Neighborhood Associations, including the Astor and Navarino Neighborhood Associations, are housed at the Howe Family Resource Center and provide families easy access to resources on housing.

The Green Bay Symphony meets and practices at Howe Family Resource Center, and some musicians use the building as a place to give music lessons.

Support Services are offered on an as-needed basis. For instance, a Hispanic coordinator was recently hired to work with local families to resolve problems ranging from domestic violence to job counseling. Referrals are available for help with food, rent, legal advice and whatever else a family may need. "A key element to our success is having someone always here who speaks the language. We try to help by educating ourselves on all the services we have here within the city of Green Bay, and when an issue comes up, we consider ourselves to be the shoulder people can lean on—we try to steer families to the right place for the kind of support they need," says Lisa Clark.

building; and opened The Howe Neighborhood Family Resource Center to serve an estimated 4,000 local families. In the words of Lisa Clark, director (and a former "Screaming Mother"), "It doesn't matter if you are an immigrant or your husband is a doctor, if you have a need and we can help, you are welcome here."

The Family Resource Center opens at 6:30 a.m. and closes most evenings at 8:30 p.m. During the day visitors come and go, some to socialize, some in search of information and help, and still others to attend one of the many programs and activities scheduled throughout the week.

In her capacity as director of the Family Resource Center, Lisa Clark is always evaluating and assessing what other services would benefit her constituency. For example, not long ago the center received an anonymous donation with the stipulation that it must be used for direct services to families. Clark immediately zeroed in on dental and health care, which remains relatively unavailable to immigrant children in Green Bay—as in virtually every community where immigrants live in large numbers—for reasons relating to language (there are few Spanish-speaking health care providers) and a lack of insurance coverage. "We wanted to provide something that people weren't getting in any other way," says Clark. "We found that dental care was a major gap. In the State of Wisconsin, it is very hard to find a dentist who will accept Medicaid, so a lot of our families are

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not getting any type of oral hygiene." There was a deficit in medical care as well. Clark took her ideas into the community for additional funding. "Within the next two months, we will have a medical area that will be included in the Family Resource Center. We will have a dental hygienist on site for 20 hours a week, and a Spanish-speaking pediatrician here five hours a week," she says.

Supporting the Families

This effective combination of pragmatic support and sincere warmth can be found next door at the Howe School itself. While academics are paramount, principal Ed Dorff's personal philosophy—reflected throughout the building—is that the relationship needs of immigrant families must always be met before the educational requirements of the children can be addressed. From the first day a parent or guardian arrives to register a child in school, the staff at Howe is galvanized to support the family in its efforts to become comfortably established in the community. As Dorff explains, "We can't accomplish the academic mission if we don't first accomplish the social mission. For kids from poor families, in particular, the families aren't going to see a lot of relevance in the academic ends of things unless a relationship of trust is established. Some of these families come here from some tough circumstances, a lot of ties have been broken, and they have left relationships behind. Our job primarily is to start to establish a relationship, to start building on that so that we can get to where we need to go with academics. We are not going to do it any other way. I really believe that."

"Ninety percent of the programming that happens within this building is community based, and it is organizations coming in and providing those services. So far, everything that I've asked or I've seen needs [to be done] within the neighborhood has been met. I don't believe in duplicating any type of services. If there's something or some organization out there that is providing some type of service that I feel can help meet the needs of the families that live here, I go after them and I beg and plead and ask them to please come and provide that service within the building. And it's been working. Everybody, everybody's been wonderful. I have an operating budget and probably one-tenth of that operating budget is where I have to find the funding to support it.

"We all pretty much live in this neighborhood and we know what the issues and needs are. [Immigrants] come here first when they have a school issue. And we talk it through and then we guide them over. You know, let's go talk to your teacher and see what's going on. We have that quite a bit."

"We're the bridge, the shoulder to lean on, and then we guide them to the right place."

—Lisa Clark, Executive Director,
Howe Family Resource Center

"There was a boy who came from Somalia, and he didn't know where his dad was, and his mom was in Somalia. So this guy, practically speaking, was an orphan. And he came back to visit us last year, and to do some work here, and now he's a senior in high school. When he came back, he walked through the halls downstairs and he looked at me. He said, 'This is my school, Mr. M.' You know, it was like, this is my home. I shared that with the principal, because this is something that we love. We really do like that young man."

—Brian Marchant
Bilingual Teacher, Howe Elementary

Every child who comes into the main office at Howe Elementary is known personally by secretary Nancy Olesen, whose desk serves as the unofficial nerve center for the school. When a new family arrives to enroll a child or children in school, an effort is made not only to evaluate where the children belong academically—by assessing grade and linguistic levels—but also to determine if the family is equipped for life in their new home. For instance, many families arrive unprepared for the harsh Wisconsin winter climate. The Family Resource Center may be asked to find coats, hats, boots and mittens, along with other support for finding housing, jobs or medical care. Parents may be referred to ESL or GED classes, and will also receive information about play groups or other programs that may benefit the family.

"I think one of the most important things we try to do for recently arrived students who don't speak English is to make them feel welcome. We have people on staff who will attempt to speak their language—it's about engaging their heart right from the start," says Brian Marchant, one of the school's bilingual ESL teachers, who might also be considered the unofficial chairman of the school's "World Community Welcome Committee." A native of the area, Marchant spent a large number of years overseas and has a strong personal commitment to this cause. With his wife, he has written numerous children's books for the Hmong population that are now available (although not widely so) throughout the country. He teaches classes for teachers and other staff who want to learn Spanish, that they might better communicate with students and parents. Marchant also runs an early morning breakfast club ("we run out of time during the school day," he says) for students who are not yet proficient in English. "ABC" (the Awesome Breakfast Club) encourages language development and meets in the cafeteria so students can also eat at the school breakfast program. Marchant hopes in the future to involve immigrant parents more in the club, but realizes that the early hour makes it difficult. "These families already are making a commitment, just by getting their children here an hour earlier in the morning," he acknowledges.

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The effort to involve parents is not incidental. Despite many obstacles—the parents' lack of education, unfamiliarity with the U.S. education system, discomfort at their inability to speak English and conflicting work schedules—principal Ed Dorff espouses his belief that in order to reach students, Howe must help parents feel welcome and necessary in their children's academic lives. "We know that the educational experience of parents is a primary factor in how far a child will go in school," he says. "There are some studies that talk about the mother's level of education as being an important determinant in what the child's educational attainment will be. A lot of the families that we deal with are headed by a single woman—a mother who herself hasn't finished high school. So one of the things that we have started talking about is how we can emphasize the importance of education by making it relevant to the adults. And here what I am talking about is actually providing educational opportunities in the school for the parents. Whether it be a GED high school equivalency program or some other kind of program where we can bring the parents in, something that would be comfortable for them, we want them to have an experience where they will be able to say, 'You know what? Maybe I didn't succeed in school before. But now I am.' If we can get that going, I know it will have a tremendous impact on the children. Because if mom, or mom and dad together, are coming to school and learning and enjoying it, it will make a difference to the child—and it will increase the likelihood that the parents are going to make sure the child is coming to school every day and on time," says Dorff.

Language Acquisition Education

Every community with a large immigrant population struggles with the challenge of how to get the parents involved in their children's educational process. The barriers are many—cultural, educational, linguistic, practical. In the Green Bay school district, parental involvement is, in fact, formally structured into the ESL/bilingual education program. According to Fay Boerschinger, ESL/bilingual coordinator for the Green Bay Public Schools, "We have a formal and structured way of working with parents. When programs were small, there were district parent meetings, which are now held at the school building level [because the programs are no longer small]. It is sort of a 'train the trainer' program. We train parents to be more active [in their children's education]."

Instruction in the early elementary grades is bilingual, meaning children learn basic academic and literacy skills in their own language, while also receiving instruction in written and spoken English. "The goal is to keep the child at grade level. The second component is to teach them English," says Boerschinger. After third grade, all children are placed in the same classrooms—but those who aren't primary English speakers continue to spend a half-day in a bilingual classroom.

That, says Boerschinger, is the official strategy. In actual fact, she notes, the situation must remain fluid, with

"My name is Sylvia Palacios. I work in Dressed Beef, I've been there for a year and a half. I have been here in Green Bay for six years. Before I lived in Houston, but it's more difficult to establish oneself there as a family. It's more difficult to find work in a big city, and if you find it, the pay is very low for the fact that there are a lot of people who also have to work. They say, well, if you [don't want the job] there is someone else who is going to take it. I worked in a restaurant and they paid me $2.50 an hour. That's very little to be paying rent and pay bills.

"I have four children now. The oldest is going to be seven, and I have twins who are four years old and they are in the Head Start program. And one boy who is a year and a half comes here with me. I heard [from a friend] that there was a place to be able to go to school, and also where I could [learn how to help my] children, because it is very difficult for us who have children to go to school."

—Sylvia Palacios
Even Start Participant

teachers adapting to the particular needs of the students as they present themselves. This can be seen one afternoon, in a large classroom at Howe. In one part of the room, Brian Marchant sits at the head of a table of Hispanic kindergarteners, playing a card game where the children must identify, in English, the activity (running, brushing hair) on each card. In another section of the room, Hmong instructor Jer Lovaj works on "writing" a story about a turtle in a pond with four Hmong kindergarteners. And in yet a third area, another ESL instructor reads to five Mexican children a story about the "Three Little Wolves and the Big, Bad Pig." Even with all these things happening at one time, there is a quiet sense of order—and when Marchant brings all the children together at one table, for a game of Sound Bingo, each child is able to comfortably interact with the group, regardless of English skills or common native language. "We figure out what these kids need and then make it happen in the best way for them," says Marchant.

This ability to improvise is, in fact, a key component of a successful bilingual education program, which must adapt to the changing needs of the population, which can vary even within one school year. "The only certainty is uncertainty," says Boerschinger. Green Bay's history provides a good example of this. When the Hmong population arrived in the 1970s, they were the first non-English-speaking group to emigrate to the area in significant numbers. Not only did the school district need to come up with a plan to teach English to the children, but—since the population was pre-literate in the sense that the Hmong written language was just then beginning to evolve—the mandate became to educate the population in the very *idea* and value of literacy. "Just the incorporation of written language into the culture was an issue," says Brian Marchant. The next wave of immigrants to the area spoke Spanish—followed quickly by another wave

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of Spanish speakers, but from Mexico, presenting a different sort of challenge.

In 1990, there were 17 Spanish-speaking children in the Green Bay school district; in 2002, there were over 1,000. But the current bilingual/ESL program has a total of 2,500 children enrolled, including some recent immigrants from Russia. Boerschinger adds, "Yesterday I got a call about three Chinese students, so we are looking at that—and the next language group we are dealing with may well be Chinese."

Community, Business and the Workforce

In a tightly-knit community such as Green Bay, where the immigrant community is seen by many as an asset to the economic well-being of the city, support comes from many different directions. Non-governmental agencies work in partnership with one another, meeting regularly as a group and with members of city government to ensure that their energy is being directed appropriately, avoiding duplication of efforts and working out an effective plan to communicate with the various populations they are all working to serve.

Paul Linzmeyer, president, Bay Towel, a commercial laundry service that employs immigrants, has been a leader in this area—both in terms of developing programs that help his own employees succeed and in mobilizing the Green Bay business community. Bay Towel is proactive. Supervisors are encouraged to learn Spanish; the company sponsors "Cultural Diversity Day" once a month to celebrate the different heritages of employees; and an in-house institution, Bay Towel University, offers instruction in a wide range of topics—parenting, financial matters, English as a second language and personal development.

Linzmeyer founded an organization three years ago called the Employers Work Force Development Network to share resources and develop partnerships for a quality workforce in Green Bay. The 40-plus member firms run training programs, work with social service agencies and

Focal Points: The Heart of a Community

- Green Bay has taken on the challenge of addressing, at the municipal level, such questions as how to educate and acculturate new immigrants to life in Green Bay, through educational resources and programs made easily accessible at neighborhood centers, churches and schools. The city has committed to changing itself, to become more receptive and supportive to its immigrant population. There is movement to teach Spanish to city employees and traffic officials, and to educate these individuals about the cultural mores of Green Bay's new residents.
- Local businesses have mobilized to address workforce issues and to attract federal grant money to support their efforts to help new immigrant workers make their way in the new community and to become more skilled and better educated. This will result in the need for fewer financial and social supports and more stable families.
- The school system has proved itself adaptive and proactive, addressing such problems among immigrant students as tardiness and truancy via development of programs and facilitating "school readiness" by the introduction of cultural and language-specific play groups.
- Parental involvement is structured into schools in several positive ways, increasing the likelihood that parents will not only see school as a resource, but will also continue their own educational efforts.

CHALLENGES

Like all schools, Howe faces some specific challenges in accomplishing its mission to educate students:

Language. Approximately 30 percent of the families at Howe are monolingual Spanish speakers. A little more than 10 percent are Hmong. A smaller percentage are Russian, with a few students from other countries.

Transient Student Population. Many immigrant families come and go throughout the school year. As of April 2002, according to Dorff, 120 of the school's 500 students had relocated out of the Howe attendance area and 103 new students had been enrolled (and 40 of those new students had already left). Additionally, Hispanic families may travel back home during the school year, taking the children out of school for several weeks or even months at a time, which creates enormous gaps in their educational experience.

Parental Involvement. Many immigrant parents have themselves only completed a few years of school—and for some of them, even that limited exposure was profoundly negative. This presents difficulties when schools try to reach out to and involve the parents.

Consistency of Funding. Since 1998, Howe has been funding its efforts through the Federal Comprehensive School Reform grant, which has provided $60,000 a year to run programs specifically targeting relationship-building with immigrant families. Other sources have been Title I, and grants received through the Family Resource Center. But these grants expire, and additional funding will need to be found.

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pursue other activities with the goal of raising the quality of the local workforce. The organization recently received a grant of $1.2 million from the federal government. "This community has a choice right now," says Linzmeyer. "We can take this issue of diversity and this immigrant population, and make it into an advantage, make it benefit our community—or we can let it go and [be like] every other city over the last century, and have urban blight with all the social and economic ills that it brings."

The city government fosters this sense of responsibility and ownership among employers, as well. According to Mayor Jadin, "The message that I bring to the community is that we [also have to] confront the pitfalls that come with the influx of diversity. And those pitfalls start with . . . significant hiring without any kind of advance warning to our educational system, our housing, our law enforcement."

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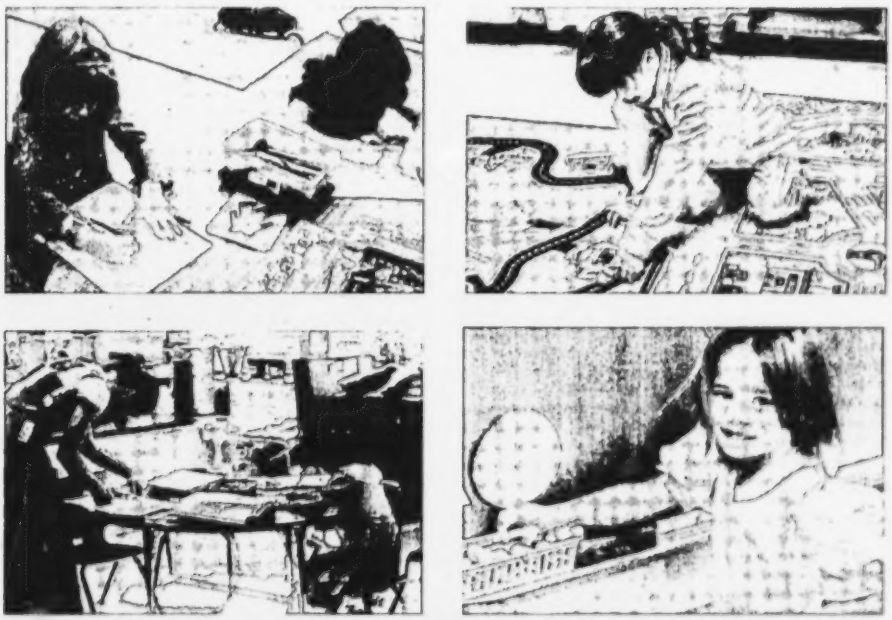
The Center/Pitts Elementary
Leadville, Colorado



A Boom/Bust Mining Community: The Latino Boom

Leadville, a self-proclaimed "boomtown," has experienced as much economic prosperity as economic hardship. But the boom they are currently experiencing is that of the "Latino Boom." While the challenges from this boom are many, The Center/Pitts Elementary has adapted to meet the needs of immigrant families and, as its name reflects, acts as the hub of the community. On any given weeknight, its doors are open and murmurs and laughter are heard in the hallways where parents are learning English. Girl Scouts are meeting, and volleyball practice is being held. By embracing this "boom," The Center/Pitts Elementary serves as the model for the rest of the community.

Nestled in a small bowl deep within the Rocky Mountains, two miles above sea level, is the town of Leadville, a municipality of Lake County, Colorado. It is a place of breathtaking beauty, with 360-degree mountain views, where even the local supermarket boasts postcard views from its plate-glass windows. Leadville is a town of considerable charm, with funky shops and cafes along Harrison Avenue, the town's main thoroughfare. The town is known for its quaint, colorful Victorian homes—in 1997 Leadville placed in the top 10 in a national contest for "Prettiest Painted Places in America." Yet the community also exudes a palpable sense of dejection. Alongside the gift shops and antique stores are the retail outlets where the real Leadville conducts its trade, and these stores are tired, poorly stocked and struggling to stay viable in the depressed local economy.

The Center/Pitts Elementary School is located on a side street. A legacy from better days, the building is relatively new and well equipped. It houses about 350 children, preschool through first grade. Of those, about half are monolingual Spanish speakers. Seventy-five percent are of Spanish heritage, and a quarter of the student population comes from families of European descent, most of whom have lived in the area for many years.

Leadville is a prime example of the inevitable inequity that results when school systems must support themselves from the tax revenues generated within the community itself—more resources go to those who already have more resources. In Leadville, school officials have, out of necessity, become adept at chasing down a variety of

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funding streams—federal, state, county, and private—to supplement their own sparse tax base, but even this can be problematic. One challenge is that the State of Colorado funding is based on a school census taken October 1 of each year. Since the seasonal work begins at Thanksgiving, that figure consistently under-represents actuality. Another is that the highly seasonal work contributes to transience. Many families spend part of the year in Leadville and return to their native country for the off-season, which is enormously disruptive to educational efforts.

Historical Perspective

Once a prosperous mining town and home to such major retailers as Montgomery Ward, J. C. Penney and Safeway, the town of Leadville now suffers a desperate lack of identity—not to mention money—since the last mine, Climax, was closed back in 1982. Even for a town with a "boom/bust" history, this was a cataclysmic event. Not only did many local people lose their jobs, but the mine closing slashed the town's tax assessment from $280 million to just $40 million. Which, needless to say, is far short of what Leadville requires—especially, say long time residents, given the enormously needy immigrant population that has settled in the community in recent years.

When Climax shut down, much of the area's population left, too, eventually replaced by Mexicans who came to work in the posh ski resorts in neighboring communities. Today, close to half of the county's population of 7,800 is Latino. Though the major resorts such as Vail, Breckenridge, Beaver Creek, and Copper Mountain are a long, perilous drive of up to an hour and a half away, immigrant workers live in Leadville, mostly in trailer parks on the outskirts of town, because it is the only affordable place to live. The jobs they work so hard to get to are difficult and undependable. There is virtually no work during the off-season and even winter employment opportunities are deeply affected by fluctuations in the economy or ski conditions. Most immigrant workers hold service jobs cleaning hotel rooms and running banquets, many of which are contractual rather than salaried positions, offering no security, no benefits and low hourly wages (though even these are far better than what workers could hope for in their native country). Immigrants also work in construction, where wages are usually higher; skilled labor is needed to work in areas such as masonry and stonework, due to the booming realty and construction industries in the neighboring counties.

There is a noticeable degree of resentment among Leadville locals toward the Mexican residents who have moved into town these past 20 years—and most especially the last five. In their view, the immigrants drain the town coffers by requiring a host of expensive services, including health care, social services, law enforcement and, of course, education—but contribute little to the local economy, since they both work and shop in other communities. Perhaps surprisingly, the hostility is even greater among the Latino families who came to Leadville long ago. They want no connection with the newcomers and resent the supports (such as bilingual education) the families are given by the community. There is even talk of gang activity between the Chicanos (long time residents) and the Latinos (the new Mexican families).

"There is a lot of impact [to having these families in our community]," says Charles O'Leary, Commissioner of Lake County. "A lot of the folks here have problems with the immigration issues in our community, starting with [the provision of] social services. We have to go out for a lot of federal and state funding to cover those. Last year it cost the Sheriff's Department a little over $100,000 to take care of the issues we had. St. Vincent's Hospital writes off an average of $500,000 to $1,000,000 caused by these impacts. And the school district has a big problem, since pretty close to 50 percent of the students up there right now come from Mexico."

"My name is Eva Tolsen and I have been in my job for eight months now. The job description is ... there is a program that recruits migrant families and the school gets funding for [assistance for] the number of immigrant kids they have here. The funding comes from the state. I work with [all the schools]. Whenever they need me, they call me. I work mostly with the families. In the beginning, when I started, I went to houses and asked people, where do you come from, what do you need. Since I am based at the high school, I have been working with the kids at the high school as well. I do translating for them. I help the kids who don't speak English do their tests, sometimes I sit down in the classroom and just explain what the teacher is talking about. The families come to me if they need clothing, if they don't have coats.

"One of the biggest challenges is to bring the parents into the school. Every meeting they called, the Hispanic parents didn't show up. Because there were no translators, they didn't understand what was going on. The teachers think the Hispanic parents don't care about their kids. But it's not that. It's just that they don't feel comfortable in the school. Most of them don't have an education. So that's part of my job, to try to bring the parents to the meetings. We started an immigrant parent committee, but I do pretty much one-on-one—like when there's a meeting, I have to go two or three times to the same family, saying remember the meeting. Come over, you know, we'll have cookies! Now I have parents helping me with the meetings, and we'll have tamales. They like it. And they ask questions, and they do care. So now they're more comfortable and they know that there is somebody in the school they can call."

—Eva Tolsen,
Latino Family Coordinator,
Lake County Schools

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School of the 21st Century Programming

The Center/Pitts Elementary was the second school in the country to become a School of the 21st Century. The Center opened in 1988, serving 100 children with preschool, child care, and before- and after-school programs. Within just a few years, enrollment had mushroomed, for the need for local child care was greater than even the planners had realized. The Center began to house more programs, such as Head Start and programs for handicapped children that were integrated into the preschool. Infant-toddler child care, support and education for teen parents, the Parents As Teachers home visitation program, a young mothers group, prenatal education and other programs were added, and by 1994 the Center had become a true community center, serving more than 1,000 children and adults. In 1990, the Center joined the Yale Center in Child Development and Social Policy's national 21C network, which provided technical assistance and support that proved especially important, given how isolated this individual initiative had turned out to be.

Today, true to its name, the school works hard to build good relationships among its students, families and the community. Signs posted on walls around the building proclaim, in both English and Spanish:

"We believe it is the responsibility of all staff to nurture, strengthen, inspire and expand each child's abilities and interests."
"We believe families are a child's first and foremost teachers."
"We believe all families must have access to affordable child care."

At present, the Center/Pitts functions as a child care center and preschool. It is also a primary grade school during the daytime hours, and is home for several community-based organizations, the community college and other programs in the evening. Partnerships, both formal and informal, exist between the school and other agencies that work to improve the quality of life for Leadville residents. The building opens at 6:30 a.m. each day and closes late in the evening, after the last of its adult meetings and classes wind down.

Language Acquisition Education

The Center/Pitts Elementary School is committed to helping all its students succeed and has made English language acquisition for its non-English speakers a primary goal. But the town also embodies the difficulty of setting policy on a matter so amorphous as teaching language skills to young children, where the "latest" thinking is always in a state of flux. As the entire State of Colorado debates adopting a policy of "immersion" (meant to teach English to children in a matter of months, rather than years), the Leadville School District has moved to shift its own philosophy from ESL to bilingual education, resulting in the current strategy which utilizes a hybrid of the two.

"In the two years since I have been here, we have evaluated our bilingual program," explains Lake County School Superintendent Bette Bullock. "[In this district] we used to educate children primarily in their home language for the first three years they were [here], and then begin to move toward the English language once they had a foundation. We have shifted from that to more of a dual approach with our English learners, so we are honoring their home

21C Programs Include:

Head Start Preschool and Child Care. Head Start services are provided to 116 children, ages three to five years, in six classrooms. Children receive developmental, hearing and vision screenings. The Center serves breakfast, lunch and two snacks daily. There is a kindergarten transition program, home visits and ongoing child assessment, as well as all-day child care.

Parenting Education. In addition to the home visits and parent-teacher conferences, Head Start and the school collaborate with Full Circle of Lake County, Inc., to facilitate parent education classes, including "Dare To Be You," a curriculum developed by Colorado State University, offered in English and Spanish, focusing on the strengths of the family rather than the deficits. Full Circle is a private nonprofit agency dedicated to empowering youth and families to make healthy choices and prevent substance abuse, violence and other unhealthy behaviors.

Family Literacy Programs provide evening programs where the parents participate in a native-language-based literacy curriculum, while their children do other supervised activities in another room. At the end of the evening, families come together for a shared activity.

Community Activities and Adult Education. The building is available to organizations meeting in the evenings. At present, during the evening hours there are classes from the local community college, ESL classes for adults, GED classes, and parenting workshops.

Before- and After-School Child Care. The building also serves as the hub for before- and after-school child care for preschool to eighth grade school students. A wide array of activities are offered and students come as early as 6:00 a.m. and leave as late as 6:00 p.m.

Even Start is a program that works to reduce poverty and illiteracy rates by improving the educational opportunities of low-income families by integrating early childhood education, adult literacy, adult basic education and parenting education, into a unified family literacy program. It is a new addition to the programs available at the Center/Pitts Elementary.

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language and at the same time giving them the English language literacy. Next year, all of our classes with non-English-speaking students will … have direct instruction in the English language, from the moment they come into the school. We will also be maintaining a home language."

Bilingual kindergarten teacher Emily May describes what that looks like in the classroom. "The structure of the program right now, as it evolves, is that in one kindergarten we have 50 percent [of instruction] done in Spanish, and 50 percent in English. In the other kindergarten, it is all English—there is no Spanish spoken. As it progresses up through the grades, by third grade [or the third year of residency in the U.S.] these Spanish speakers are expected to speak and do all their work in English." She adds that support, in the form of a bilingual paraprofessional, is available to children who continue to need help with the language.

The school also has a Spanish as a Second Language (SSL) program for students, teaching monolingual English speakers to communicate in Spanish. The emphasis is on communication as a two-way process. A first grade ESL classroom recently learned to sign the song "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" as a reinforcement of this concept—all people communicate, although not always in exactly the same way.

Supporting Families

It is not only imperative that the children learn to speak English, but that their parents do so as well. One of the issues encountered by school personnel is that mothers and fathers who don't speak the language feel isolated from the school, and are unable to support their children's learning at home. This is both a function of language acquisition and literacy level in their native language. It is further complicated in this community by the difficult working conditions of the immigrant parents, who may face a commute of up to an hour and a half each way to work and are therefore almost never at home and available to their children.

School principal Paula Canning (who held the position for two years, but has since left), herself the daughter of Mexican immigrants and a former ESL teacher in a neighboring school district, was committed to improving communication throughout the school and with parents at home. All notices from the Center/Pitts are sent home in both English and Spanish. Translators attend school meetings, so parents can hear the proceedings in their native language. There are two bilingual liaison positions, one at the preschool level and one who works with the elementary through high school grades. Last year Canning began to teach a course in basic Spanish to teachers at the school, in the hope that it will increase communication among teachers, parents and students.

The bilingual intake worker hired for the Head Start program now also works part-time in the main office at the school. She helps to register newcomers and to get families the support services they need to properly care for their children—including health care and insurance, dental care and other social supports. She makes referrals to local agencies and helps educate parents on how to work within the new school system to help their children thrive. She is also the person families go to when they need help and/or don't understand something about the school.

"I like to think that all of our children benefit from Head Start, because Head Start is the model that we follow [here]. Regardless of which program you are in, you receive Head Start services—and we provide Spanish-speaking resources [for immigrant families]. Since we opened in 1988, that has been our goal—that this would be a one-stop-shop kind of atmosphere."

—Connie Long,
Head Start Director

"We are lucky we have a family service worker who speaks Spanish and is a real trusted person in the community," says Head Start director Connie Long. "If there is a question about a note that has gone home, they will call or she will call them and make sure they are comfortable with what is going on. She has been a real link between the school and the Spanish-speaking community, and I think that has been huge. You have to have [a] trusted person, I think, so they know it is safe. It is a good thing."

Although the preschool has a unique funding system, Long—director since the program opened—says her vision has always included providing the full range of Head Start services to all children and families enrolled.

Focal Points: The Heart of a Community

- Leadville illustrates what's wrong with a system of public education funding where school district budgets are primarily derived via property or local income tax revenues. As a low-income community, Lake County schools don't have the same financial resources as wealthier communities. Staff turnover has been, and continues to be, a problem because the district cannot offer competitive salaries. Students already considered to be "at risk" are at an even greater disadvantage, without access to the same student-teacher ratios, paraprofessional staff, services and programming, building and classroom materials, technology, and innovative approaches to education, long-term academic planning or art and musical enrichment programs. The current system also creates a "white flight" climate where the community's wealthier families can send their children to other, more affluent districts or private schools, perpetuating economic and racial segregation, and further widening the achievement gap.

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Long notes that in conjunction with the 21C model, different agencies have actually been housed right in the school building. "Whether it was food stamps or whatever kind of help they needed, they could come here. Now we are able to have them come down and fill out an application for Medicaid and CHP Plus to get health insurance. Whether enrolling in Head Start or not, all those services are available here. Parents are working long hours, and we provide the child care for them. They can get a lot of other services when they come and pick up their child. They know the child has been in a safe place and is learning. We want them to be comfortable in the building, so that when they do go to public school, they are comfortable with that, also."

Long focuses on preparing both children and families for life in public school, and unique social and physical environment in Leadville. For instance, the four-year-olds learn to ski as part of the preschool curriculum, and there is an annual family ski outing. The preschool curriculum is geared toward helping children to transition from preschool to kindergarten. The preschool and kindergarten teachers meet regularly and visit one another in their classrooms.

There is a Title I funded teaching position that is divided between preschool and kindergarten. The Title I teacher attends planning meetings in both areas. There are joint activities for both groups, such as ice cream socials, to which the entire family and school staff are invited. The preschoolers spend a day in kindergarten toward the end of

"I am Leticia Rodriguez. I have one baby, Alain Rodriguez, and he is three years old. I am from Mexico, from Cuidad Juarez, the border of El Paso, Texas. I have been here ... it is going to be three years. I have been able to go to school. I am learning English. My son has more attention, he has learned more. He deals with more capable people, which he doesn't have in Mexico.

"I work in Vail, for Vail Associates. That's a job I got through a sister [of my husband]. His sister worked there for many years, now she doesn't. I do housekeeping.

"Almost every day I have to travel a lot because it is a 45-minute drive. In cold weather it is very hard. It is very risky, because the road is very long and cold and also the ice—it is very dangerous. Sometimes I am afraid. Because I don't know if I am going to come back. When one leaves the house, and there is a snowstorm, and you can't see anything, or you have to stop on the road or you see that people are overturning, you are upset, because you don't know if you are going to come back again. Sometimes I kiss my son and I don't know if I am going to come back.

"Where I work, you have a contract, which means I earn depending on what I do. They pay if I clean a certain number of rooms. In other places, it is by the hour and they have a schedule, a fixed salary. Sometimes my hands are so sore I can't touch my hair. I can't wash dishes because my hands are all cut.

"There are a lot of people that are racist. I have my papers and everything, but I am still Mexican to some people, so you have to work more, they give you the hardest work. Last year I had someone that was very bad. He treated me badly. Sometimes there are rooms that people destroy—and in fact, he has to pay more for that and he doesn't. Sometimes I have to pick up with my hands what the dogs dispose of, in a way of speaking. That has to be done by security, but in this hotel there is no—how do you call it? No one protects the workers. It is such a simple and small hotel. In the meantime I am studying so I can find a better job.

"My plans? I would like very much to help, like in a company on how to help children. A job in which I don't do so much extra work, in which I am not mistreated. Jobs in which I can help my people. In which I can help other people. Those are my plans. To help myself, to help my family, to help other people, because I can see how hard it is. The government gives a lot of help, thanks to that help, we survive here. I am someone that has lived very difficult experiences with people taking care of my son. I have never left him in day care because there is never enough room.

"My husband has two jobs right now. He works in Beaver Creek, that is much further than Vail. He has to go over the top of the mountains. I make 45 minutes to work, he makes one hour and twenty minutes. We owe on our trailer, he wants to pay that fast, because he wants to spend more time with our son. He leaves at 5 in the morning and gets home at 12 at night. From Monday to Friday. We almost don't see him. I sometimes go to bed late to wait for him, to see him, to know that he is well.

"When I filled out the forms for my son in the school, I told them I didn't speak English. I asked them to send me forms on how I could ... that we could both work together.

"When they send the homework, we both work together. I go to English school. I am always finding out where I can go to learn more. I only need to learn a little bit more English and—to change completely, from one life to another.

"I wish that my son studies a lot, so that when he gets bigger, he'll become someone successful. So he won't work as much as I have. Since I was ten years old, I have been working. Now I am going to be 27. I just finished school. I never could study, for lack of money, and I want my son to take advantage of as much as he can, all that is available to him."

—Leticia Rodriguez, Parent
The Center/Pitts Elementary

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the school year, and on that day the parents meet with the principal, who talks with them about what kindergarten will be like for their children. At the last Head Start home visit or preschool parent-teacher conference, each child receives a "transition bag" that is filled with supplies and activities for the parent and child to do together during the summer, to keep up their school skills. This allows the teacher, parent and student to talk more in depth about kindergarten.

Community, Business and the Workforce

The fact that most parents work outside Leadville is significant to the town's educational efforts. The biggest issue is funding. "Business is what covers most of the expenses under your tax base," says Rosemary Pettus, Director, Colorado Workforce Center, Lake County Department of Labor. "The big issue is we do not have an employment base here. Most of the labor force in Lake County is going into either Summit County or Eagle County to work. The jobs are not here. What we have here is primarily residential and [that is not enough] to keep everything going and the county growing, and so forth. Another issue is that a lot of the people that are working over the hill [in Summit and Eagle Counties] are seasonal people or are in the service industry. They [often] do not have health benefits. There are times when they are unemployed. So it is a strain because a lot of those people are getting medical services and they don't have insurance. Or they are receiving food stamps or other agency supports or programs that the county has to provide."

A workforce task force is looking at ways to address these issues, says Pettus. A new cultural diversity position has been funded to translate into Spanish informational materials on wages, working conditions and how to find a job. The organization is developing videotapes in five languages on laws and law enforcement, health services, education and legal issues. The group is also looking at ways to bring jobs to Leadville. "It would require a whole shift in thinking," says Pettus, "but it could be anything from reservationists to back office operations for banks, hospitals, or medical centers. Laundry facilities. Storage warehouses. Things are getting so expensive in [other counties] that it might be a solution."

CHALLENGES

This community faces all the same challenges of any school system in helping immigrants to thrive, but also some that are unique to this environment. A summary of what school officials consider their most pressing obstacles would include:

Hostility to Newcomers. There is more than the usual level of animosity directed at the recently arrived immigrant population because their presence is perceived as expensive and disruptive. Also, since most work and shop in other communities, there is little economic advantage to the community. Income tax from Lake County (Leadville) residents who work outside the county is paid to the county where the job or employer is based, not where they live. People also tend to shop where they work. As one local put it, "The only things they buy in town are milk and lettuce."

Lack of Parental Involvement in Education. Several factors impede a friendly, supportive relationship between parents and the school, including a language barrier, long working hours, low level of parental education, and cultural differences in the relationship between families and schools in Mexico and here in the U.S.

Inconsistent Funding. The Leadville tax base is depressed. Funding comes from other sources, including the state and the U.S. government, but is inconsistent and impacted by many different factors, including the transience of the population.

Competition for Grants. Community-based organizations like Full Circle have a difficult time competing for grant dollars because the number of people they aim to serve cannot compare with other agencies in larger cities like Denver. Despite the grave need for programs and services in Lake County, funders aiming to get the biggest bang for their buck overlook the impact they can have in a small community, and tend to allocate their money to programs serving a larger population.

Staff Turnover. Living conditions can be difficult in Leadville and there are few employment opportunities for family members, which means that it can be difficult to recruit and retain quality staff. This is especially true on the administrative level where, in the words of School Board representative Christopher Barnes, "We cycle through administrators, leaving us with a complete lack of consistency. Our teachers have no choice but to be self-led."

Latino Culture. Latino families are close and supportive of one another, but unlikely to allow outsiders in. This poses a problem with the delivery of social service supports.

"White Flight." Many families with the means to do so opt for their children to attend school in nearby Buena Vista, a more homogenous community.

No Future. Employment prospects are, and have long been, bleak in Leadville. The high-school dropout rate of 40 percent is among the highest in Colorado because kids question the value of a diploma and seldom have aspirations beyond working in the local resorts.

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Another business initiative aims to reduce the high school dropout rate. Pettus says her organization has hired a new staff member to go into the high school, target high-risk kids, and help them develop portfolios and opportunities for the future. "We are trying to do some mentoring," says Pettus. "[Our staff person] also works with their teachers. She is working with their parents. She is working with the community as a whole new way to try to get this particular population of students to stay in school."

A specific project has high schoolers endeavoring from the start of freshman year to develop a working portfolio that will help them with the process of pursuing a future—whether it is getting into a junior or four-year college. The surrounding communities are beginning to contribute as well. A coalition of representatives from neighboring counties, known as the Rural Resort Region, is looking at ways to resolve the inequities faced by Leadville. School superintendent Bette Bullock notes, "We are getting together to look at grant opportunities in a joint way. And we have had some success in that. We have also tapped into the resources in the surrounding areas to assist in our school, and that has been tremendously supportive and very helpful in connecting our county to a county right next door. We have had some support financially for our summer programs."

Another issue is that parents who work far away have no access to the school during regular hours and are thus unable to support their children's efforts and participate in school functions. Bullock sees this as a growing priority. "I will be contacting businesses where our parents work and asking them to assist us when we have daytime things that we would like our parents to attend."

Leadville is in the difficult position of needing always to ask for help, notes Bullock. "We seem to be sort of the poster child on this issue," she says. "But we also have a commodity that the counties around us need. We provide workers. We have lower housing costs. The resorts rely on the people who live in this community. So I see a nice exchange there, between communities that surround us and the Leadville community. I think we can probably pursue some of those further."

Within Lake County's border, Full Circle, Inc., is one of only a handful of nonprofit organizations working to support the community, students and families at the Center/Pitts Elementary. Since its inception in 1991, Full Circle's outreach efforts have been closely tied to education, but also include aspects of general healthy living. Full Circle serves all members of the community and strives to bring together and incorporate all newcomers into its programming. These efforts include, but are not limited to, providing advocacy for Spanish-speaking parents at school-related functions; initiating family activities to bring Latino families into the community; tutoring and mentoring for at-risk kids; building leadership skills with high school students; aiding with projects such as a skate park; sponsoring a disc jockey club; and an adolescent outdoors health program. Results from the "Dare To Be You" parenting program, offered in Spanish and English, have shown a statistically significant decrease in parental stress and harsh punishment and a statistically significant increase in communication and limit setting. Full Circle also works in partnership with East View Mountain Trailer Park and Abel Velasquez, a pastor and Hispanic Outreach person, to bring programs directly to the participants. Abel is currently working on building a community center. In the meantime, the trailer park serves as a temporary meeting space and provides the space for some of Full Circle's classes. The mission of Full Circle is to provide youth and families opportunities, skills and recognition for the development of healthy attitudes and behavior and the prevention of unhealthy behaviors.

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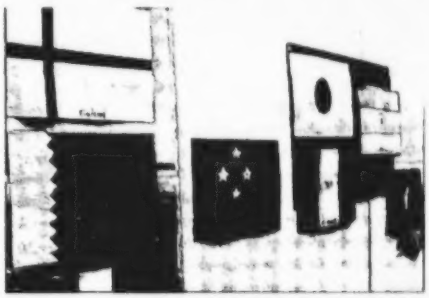
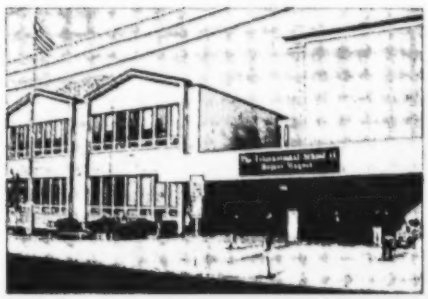
The International School at Rogers Magnet
Stamford, Connecticut

A Language Magnet: Managing 17 Languages

The many languages spoken at Rogers Magnet symbolize the diversity of the immigrants that call Stamford home. Flags hanging in the halls illustrate that Rogers is proud of its diverse student body. By building on the richness of the student population and providing a myriad of programming and academic enrichment opportunities, Rogers serves as an example of how many languages, cultures, economic and social backgrounds can co-exist and flourish.

Stamford, Connecticut, is at once a city of the past and of the future. Located just 30 miles outside New York City, Stamford is both a bedroom suburb of New York and a thriving urban community in its own right. Nationally recognized as a major financial center, Stamford now ranks as the country's third largest corporate headquarters community. Everything about the city is diverse—the economy, the population, the landscape. It is a community that is simultaneously urban, suburban and rural. There are wide, sandy beaches; leafy woods and winding country roads; sophisticated shopping and restaurants; and the inevitable urban blight (though far less of it than was the case two short decades ago). Housing in Stamford is plentiful but pricey. Even in a recession, white-collar unemployment is relatively low, blue-collar lower yet, and many jobs for the unskilled go begging.

The rich mix of population and culture presents a major challenge for Stamford's educators, who must uphold the city school system's historically sterling reputation while also meeting the fundamental educational needs of the newest residents, many of whom speak no English at all. Of all the schools in Stamford, this is most true at The International School at Rogers Magnet, located in the east side of Stamford. As a magnet school, Rogers is situated in a neighborhood with a disproportionately high minority population. The school receives extra funding to provide programming that is intended to attract majority students from other neighborhoods throughout the city.

The street on which Rogers is located is densely populated, a modest neighborhood where families of Hispanic, Haitian, Middle Eastern and Eastern European origin live, shop and attend school in close proximity with a global village of small markets and restaurants. There are two Catholic churches offering Spanish-speaking masses within a quarter-mile of the school, and several other small storefront churches for other segments of the population. Just

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down the street is the place known as "under the bridge" where day laborers gather each morning in an informal labor market, waiting for the privilege of being chosen for a day's work in construction or landscaping.

However, Rogers is also the school for nearby Shippan Point, one of Stamford's prettiest and most prestigious neighborhoods. Home to some of the city's oldest families—many are the Irish and Italian Catholics of an earlier wave of immigration—Shippan is a wealthy waterfront community with large and gracious homes flanking the broad, tree-lined boulevard that runs the length of the picturesque peninsula. Most Shippan families could easily afford to send their children to private school. That they choose to go to Rogers speaks volumes about the school's commitment to quality education.

Yet the school is one of the lowest performers in the city when it comes to test scores. This is because of the high percentage of non-English-speaking households that feed into the school population, a hot issue at Rogers right now as the city is evaluating whether to redistrict some of these children to other parts of the city. In so doing, the burden of providing bilingual support would be spread more evenly, but the school would lose its neighborhood flavor and its identity would change completely.

"Rogers is one of the few neighborhood schools left in Stamford," says principal Cathy Cummings. "Just because of our physical location, we have a very diverse group of students, who go from the very wealthiest neighborhoods in Stamford to some of the very poorest neighborhoods, with the largest immigrant population in the area." Indeed, the Rogers school population of 630 students is 70 percent minority: 23.7 percent black (mostly Haitian); 41.3 percent Hispanic; 4.9 percent Asian; and 30.2 percent white. There are 17 languages spoken at the school.

Historical Perspective

Once known as a manufacturing center, Stamford has undergone a dramatic change over the past 25 years as it has transformed itself into a white-collar city. But Stamford is, and always has been, a city of immigrants. At the height of the country's immigration wave in 1910, fully one-third of the city's residents were foreign-born. Today, Stamford has a population of 117,000, 40 percent minority. It is an amazing mixture. Current census figures show the city population is ten percent Irish, seventeen percent Italian, six percent Polish, three percent Russian, five percent West Indian. Nearly 70 percent of the population is white, 15.4 percent is black, and 16.8 percent is Latino.

The schools, of course, reflect that diversity. According to Lupe Dauplaise, director of bilingual programs for the Stamford Board of Education, there are currently 54 different languages represented in the city's public schools. "I [can tell] where we are having political problems in the world, I don't have to listen to the news," says Dauplaise, who herself came to Stamford as an immigrant from Cuba at the age of five. "I just [see where] parents are coming from. We have been having Argentineans and Uruguayans. We have Colombians coming because of terrorism. And Peru. And then [we] are still getting the Dominican Republicans coming in, and also Honduras and El Salvador. Slowly it has been changing. We have gotten Eastern Europeans. Polish students. Russian students. Albanian students. Some Orientals, but that is just a smattering. And lately, a lot of people from Bangladesh."

This most recent wave of immigrants to the Stamford area started as a slow trickle in the 1960s. At that time, the city became a destination for Hispanic families, many of whom later moved to less expensive communities when lower Fairfield County housing costs began to skyrocket in the 1980s. Haitians also started to arrive in large numbers in the 1980s, due to that country's political problems. The surge continued as the economic boom of the 1990s took hold.

Community, Business and the Workforce

There is no major employer or particular industry drawing people to Stamford. The city's proximity to New York City is one reason it attracts immigrant families. It is clean and safe. If expensive, housing is at least affordable relative to the neighboring communities of Greenwich, New Canaan and Darien, affluent towns which provide numerous employment opportunities for people looking to work as domestics or in construction, and in fact, a large percentage of Stamford's immigrant population does work for private employers in the service industry. Many are in the construction and landscap-

"Rogers had ESL classes for adults, but in the day, they don't have evening ones. Then I asked, are they full? Yes. Do you have any evening [classes]? No. I said, do you know what percentage of the parents that are going to these two ESL classes during the day make up your non-English-speaking households? Because that is an interesting and very important question. If only ten percent of your parents are going, you haven't really affected them.

"[For the administration] to be thrust into one of the lowest performing schools, in a situation where you have a majority of minority students, is tough. It is very tough. I commend them. They're walking a very fine line trying to be supportive to the entire school community. So I was asking as a member of the Board because I think it was important. If the majority of your students right now are coming from non-English-speaking households, that means that those kids, the partnerships that you want with those parents, is to bring those parents in and get them the English. Why? Because if they have English, they can then do homework with their children. They can read with their children. They can follow up with their children. But if they don't know English, they can't do anything."

—Alex Martinez,
Stamford Board of Education

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"I was born in Haiti, and left Haiti in 1985, to come to Connecticut. Since then I have been living in Connecticut 17 years, with my wife and three kids and, of course, my mother, too. My sister, the first one here, was here in Stamford, and when I was ready to leave Haiti, she was in Connecticut, so I had no choice but to come here.

"I go to work to make a living. I am a mechanic. My job is fixing buses. Of course you know for a bus that has been running every day, there are a lot of broken parts. And you have to be there to replace them, they are for the kids to be picked up and dropped off every day at school. I work for Laidlaw Transit, my schedule hours are 3 o'clock in morning till around 5 or 6 at night, depends on how many buses we got to fix. This season you get less problems, and that makes me come home early, sometimes at 2 or 2:30, and that gives me a chance to pick up my daughter at Rogers School.

"When I left Haiti to come here, I left from Haiti with a good background, so that when I came here, I had no problems to be part of the community. I was able to speak English, not as well as now, but coming with a different language was hard. I heard a lot of people [talk] about prejudice and stuff like that, but I never came to a point to see that.

"My goal for [my daughter] is to see her doing well in her life, because that is why I try to work hard, to provide them with whatever they really need. And anything she asks, I will do my best within the power of God to make sure she has it. My goal is for her to be good in the society, and for her to be responsible for herself so that way she will have no problems in the future."

—Clifford Xantos, Parent
Rogers Magnet

ing industries. Immigrants may also work in private homes, providing child care or cooking and cleaning. Job opportunities in hotels and restaurants or with janitorial services are also plentiful.

"In Stamford, most immigrants are working in a host of jobs," says Alex Martinez, an attorney who specializes in immigration law and an elected member of the Board of Education who is committed to representing the issues of immigrants in the city. "They are doing office cleaning jobs, a lot of them are janitors. [They are] working in factories like Clairol. A lot of them are cleaning houses, or working as nannies, or working in a restaurant. [They are not working in] a single industry, just meat-packing or factory workers. They are spread out."

The population is diverse but as often occurs, certain ethnic groups end up working in the same places. The local taxi company is almost completely staffed by Haitians, while the taxi company the next town over employs mostly Eastern Europeans. Many Hispanics work in construction and landscaping. And many Middle Eastern and Indian families have benefited from laws that allow educated, skilled workers to come to the United States (though language barriers may prevent them from working at their chosen profession).

It is extraordinarily expensive to live in the Stamford area. It is rare for a family to be able to survive on a single income. In many homes, both parents work long hours, often at more than one job. Many workers are employed as day laborers, with no job security and no health benefits. They may be subject to abuse or even scamming by employers who disappear without paying the wages workers are due.

It's difficult, therefore, to address issues like working conditions since there is no single individual or agency able to represent the many venues in which immigrants may be employed. However, in recent years, some industries—janitorial and health care, specifically—have successfully unionized the local labor force, resulting in improved working conditions. "Justice for Janitors" was the tagline for a recruitment campaign that succeeded in uniting some 4,000 custodians in the city a few years ago. "It was a very successful effort," says Alex Martinez. "Most were Spanish-speaking people. It really put their plight on the map. Across the board, they got wage increases and health benefits—that was unheard of. The second phase went after health care workers because [that industry was not] paying workers very well. And it also got people motivated—one of the newest elected members of the Board of Education, Chiquita Stephenson, works for a nursing home."

There are both formal and informal networks working to better local conditions for Hispanics. There is a Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, says Martinez. "They have been trying to get all the Hispanic businesses together to keep an eye on what is going on and to have more of a political voice in Stamford. There's an Equadorian association, there's a Peruvian association. And a lot of great leaders. There is a great list of [Hispanic] professionals, like me. We are not united, we don't have monthly meetings, but I can call upon them. And if in health or education you need something, you can pick up the phone and you call. We rally, and you take care of an issue."

Not quite as well ensconced, the Haitian community has nonetheless mobilized to provide supports and resources for its own people as well. The Haitian Community Center, established 18 years ago, provides some support and services, such as translation. They also run an after-school child care program, with homework tutoring. At St. John's Catholic Church, located a few miles from Rogers, the Haitian American Catholic Center also sponsors a host of programs and services for Haitian families whose cultural values tie them closely to religion. These services range from classes on integration into American culture, child care, and summer camp, to ESL, after-school and citizenship programs.

Connecticut Training and Employment (CTE) is one community action agency that provides assistance and support for both groups—and anyone else who needs help.

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CTE receives tri-lingual grant funding to provide services in English, Spanish and Creole (for the Haitian population). Among other services, CTE offers ESL instruction, computer training and job-search support to immigrants, in addition to case management, youth services and substance abuse counseling. Says Eugene Campbell, director of family development for CTE, "It is a true mosaic here. [People seem to believe] there are streets of gold. They come to Stamford, sometimes literally with nothing. There is a pipeline [among the documented immigrants] that says come to CTE and we can get you into job training programs and offer you computers and ESL. But there is this other part of the population who are not citizens, who are here [illegally] and who we service, but we can't send them out because if you don't have a social security number, you can't get a job."

That particular group of undocumented immigrants is most vulnerable, says Campbell. Not only do they have no access to labor unions and other organizations that ensure fair working conditions, but they cannot obtain public assistance, low-cost housing or other support to help them to build a new life. CTE helps in whatever ways it can, including providing advice on immigration issues.

Supporting the Families

Those organizations notwithstanding, immigrants who settle in Stamford must become adept at figuring out how life works in their new home. There is little hand-holding available in Stamford. This is partially due to the size of the city and its mixed urban/suburban identity and partially a result of the diversity of the population.

The Board of Education recently funded a Family Resource Coordinator position for the city. But the position is new and is structured so that one person works with all the city schools, so the impact is lessened, and at Rogers seems yet to be realized. The staff at Rogers School does not see solving family problems as part of its mission. Though Rogers considers itself a community school and is indeed oriented toward a broader view of education than simply providing academic instruction in the classroom, there is no formal or structured means for providing support and assistance to families. Their hands are full simply trying to provide an academic framework for such a diverse student population.

It is clear Rogers needs resources other than textbooks and chalk. Students' basic needs, such as housing and food, must be met before they can be successful at school. Assistant Principal Michael Rinaldi explains, "When kids come to school and they're tired because they're living in a cramped apartment, when they don't have enough [to meet] the basic needs, then they don't come to school ready to learn. It's okay if they come and they don't speak English very well. And it's okay if they come and they haven't had a lot of school experience in their native country. That's just the way it is, we can deal with it. But what becomes difficult is all those other things … If you have a rough night, you're up late and you have a couple of things on your mind, you come to school and you're having difficulty concentrating. When you are sitting here and you are worried about your mom because she's so tired, because she's working two jobs. Your dad is either there or he's not. We only see the tip of the iceberg. Sometimes it's really sad, because you can't do it all. It's impossible."

One way Rogers broadens support of families and students is by including the business community in educational issues. Sam Cinguen, the owner of the local supermarket chain, Grade A, has close ties with the school, beyond the fact that many of his employees are bilingual and live in the Roger's catchment area. Cinguen, once a student at Rogers, has cultivated a warm relationship with students and staff at Rogers over the years, most recently by bringing the proudly displayed Cow Statue "RoSea" to the school building. Once chosen as a "principal for a day," he had a chance to learn about the intricacies educators face. Cinguen's involvement at Rogers speaks to his vested interest in an educated future workforce and the power of local business relationships.

Focal Points: The Heart of the Community

- Stamford's efforts to address the needs of immigrants who aren't from one of the locally dominant groups through its Newcomer Program are commendable. It is a challenge to educate so many children in so many different languages at one time and in one place.
- Rogers has implemented a number of programs to help boost the self-esteem of immigrant children. One such program is providing Spanish instruction to English-speaking children, thus enabling the children who speak in Spanish to experience a sense of pride in their language and heritage.
- When school performance is measured by standardized testing, there is an inevitable plunge in scores in schools with a high number of immigrant students. Current policy for bilingual education requires that test results for non-English speakers be included in school averages after the student has had three years of education, but research shows that academic language comprehension, as opposed to social comprehension, can take up to seven years.

Stamford Public Education Foundation is an organization at the district level working toward acquiring corporate sponsorship to fund various projects and activities. The Foundation has been "very successful in engaging the corporate community in our mission and having them trust us with their educational, philanthropic dollars, and to have us provide oversight and evaluations for programs that go on in the schools," says Cathy Gunta, executive director of the Foundation. Rogers and the Foundation realized that many of the immigrant workers working at Clairol have children at Rogers, so they pitched their idea to the company and a new partnership was born. Clairol provided Rogers with a $50,000 grant for Rogers School Community Center Organization (ROSCCO) programming and in addition allowed its employees time to volunteer at the school.

School of the 21st Century Programming

Rogers Magnet School's roots as a community school extend all the way back into the 1970s, when the Rogers School Community Center Organization (ROSCCO) was founded to provide programs at the school for neighborhood residents. With that connection already in place, the school very naturally was attracted to becoming a School of the 21st Century when the State of Connecticut announced its grant competition for funds in 1992.

"As an organization, we felt that when the 21C grants became available, we were an excellent candidate for those grants. It fits directly into our mission and vision, which is to provide services to the Rogers School community," says Christina Ramoglou, Executive Director, ROSCCO. "We've been living this vision for 25 years, and that is that we work in partnership with the school, in partnership with other agencies to provide services within the school building." The programs at Rogers are customized with an eye toward the nature of the school population, says Ramoglou, which means the needs of the immigrant families are always taken into consideration. "Personally, I just think of it as our school population, and our goal as a community center organization is that when families walk into the school, they are welcome," she says. "[We want for people to be] able to receive the services they need—and if it is a translation, someone to answer a question, someone to give a referral or resource, we have staff on hand who speak Spanish, who speak Creole. And we also get parents involved in helping with translations and with school activities, so it is not just staff doing these things."

ROSCCO aggressively seeks partnerships within the community, which has benefited the school and 21C programs enormously. According to Ramoglou, ROSCCO currently partners with the Child Care Center of Stamford for operation of the child care component; with the city's public library for literacy programming; with the Science Education Center for science enrichment programming for the after-school child care program; and with the Department of Continuing Education for ESL instruction. In conjunction with Literacy Volunteers, ROSCCO also sponsors Family Literacy Day, a program that runs each Friday as an adjunct to ESL classes. Parents are invited to bring young children into the cafeteria in the morning to be read to, and they also receive a free book to take home and keep. In collaboration with the Stamford Health System, ROSCCO also facilitates mammogram screenings for underserved populations by hosting a mobile mammogram unit and setting up appointments.

21C Programs Include:

Head Start Preschool and Child Care. The preschool program is bilingual and open for children ages three through five. Child care is available for preschoolers, on a sliding fee scale, with multilingual child care providers (Spanish and Creole).

Family Resource Center (FRC), providing information and referral services and home visitation for families in the Rogers catchment area. The FRC also provides parenting information and workshops, including Parents As Teachers, a home visitation program.

Adult ESL programs, with two classes at beginning and intermediate levels, meeting four days a week.

Family Literacy, geared toward helping parents develop literacy skills for the entire family. Child care is provided, school materials (such as permission slips, PTO announcements and calendars of events) are used for instructional purposes, and a "Read A Book" program gives children's books to each family to read together, so parents are learning English in the context of supporting their child's education.

Before- and After-School Child Care with homework support and enrichment classes. The school building opens at 7:30 a.m. and after-school care runs until 5:30 each evening.

School Vacation and Summer Child Care programs, open to children throughout the city, as well as to Rogers students.

Family Child Care Training and Outreach programs for local child care providers.

Well-Baby Clinics are held bi-weekly in the cafeteria and serve families at no cost. This clinic is facilitated by the FRC and the services are provided by the Stamford Board of Health.

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Language Acquisition Education
Just from walking the streets of Stamford, and specifically around Rogers School, it is clear that language and education are weighty issues. Though a total of 17 different languages are represented among the student population, Spanish and Creole are the two spoken most often—and the school makes an effort to translate materials into both when possible (though they are more consistent in Spanish). Recent parent meetings, held separately for those who speak Spanish and those who speak Creole, addressed the questions and concerns of families with children in bilingual classes. At both meetings, communication and parental

CHALLENGES

Rogers Magnet School faces some difficult and complex challenges, many due to the incredible diversity of the school population:

Language. With 17 different languages spoken in the school, it is nearly impossible for teachers and administrators to ensure that each child is receiving the appropriate level of linguistic and academic instruction. The City of Stamford is committed to quality education for all students, continually evaluating bilingual and ESL instruction programs, and is currently in the process of reviewing Rogers School with an eye toward redistricting and a restructuring of the bilingual program.

Cultural Differences. The Haitian community, in particular, and to some extent, Hispanics as well, have difficulty acclimating to the structure of family life in Stamford. Stricter parenting—with physical punishment—is the norm for Haitian families. Though they want their children to have good lives in America, many of these families deplore what they perceive as a lack of respect from youth toward their elders. "[In Haiti] if there is a problem, a parent can come to the teacher and say, I give you the authority to beat him up. So I know [a lot of families] get in trouble with the Department of Children and Family Services here," says Emilio Revolus, Executive Director, Haitian Community Center.

Cultural Identity. Another issue among Haitians that impedes involvement with schools is that parents themselves are resistant to assimilation. "They are Haitian, they would like to stay Haitian," says Father Jean Ridley Julien, Chaplain to the Haitian community and Executive Director, Haitian American Catholic Center of Greater Stamford.

Economic Diversity. Because the student population at Rogers represents two extremes—wealthy and poor—the school tends to divide itself along economic/geographic lines. This is especially noticeable with regard to parental involvement. Although there are programs and special events that celebrate the school's diversity, such as international potluck dinners, the PTO is mostly white. Efforts to increase involvement among minority families are ongoing, but not especially successful thus far.

Disparity in Academic Achievement. "In our school, the top test scores—our top students here—are comparable to any other top test scores in any other elementary school in Stamford," says Assistant Principal Rinaldi. "That tells me that if you come here, the quality of the education is sound. But when you see our test scores in the paper, that's another issue. It has nothing to do with the innate ability of the students who are members of the immigrant population here, but it makes sense that if you don't speak English well, it is going to be difficult to score high on a test."

No Family Support Person. Rogers School is supportive of its families in spirit and in reality when necessary. The Family Resource Center coordinator takes on the role as the family support person when a teacher or administrator brings it to the coordinator's attention. The coordinator puts families in contact with agencies, connects them to needed resources and acts as a translator. This kind of support is available for families at Rogers, but a gap exists where a primary system for providing practical assistance to children and families is needed. "Teachers are the first line of defense," says Rinaldi. "If it is a situation where the child is in need of some clothing or resources, there are folks we can put the parents in touch with."

Less Parental Involvement Among Immigrant Families. Like most schools with a large immigrant population, Rogers School teachers and administrators continually struggle with the issue of how to get parents who don't speak the language, don't have much time, lack access to transportation and child care, and don't have a full understanding of the benefits of parental involvement in schools to be active participants in their child's education.

Communication with Parents. Many immigrant parents aren't aware of the full spectrum of programs and services available at the school because they aren't able to read and understand materials sent home with their children.

Inconsistent Funding. The breadth of programs at Rogers could be expanded with additional funding. "I think the goal should be that the building is open as late as possible, that there are activities going on all the time," says Ramoglou. "We can only program and plan to the extent that we have the staffing and dollars [to pay for it all]. I would like to have more family dinners and provide child care, and use those events to bring more families in. In an ideal world, there would be additional funding for that."

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involvement with the child's teacher were stressed as important goals for parents.

The first contact for new families coming to Rogers is with one of the school secretaries (both speak Spanish). The families are asked to show proof of residency in Stamford—important, says Assistant Principal Rinaldi because historically "we have had a lot of kids in our school who don't actually live in this district. And we have a responsibility to keep our class sizes small. So, on the one hand, we are trying to welcome anybody who legitimately moves into our school district, but at the same time we want to be really sure they live where they say they do." Once the children are registered, he continues, "With regard to the Latino families, we give them the option, if the children don't speak English, of whether or not they want to be in a bilingual classroom. We have bilingual classes, kindergarten through fifth grade. If they want that, they are put in one of the bilingual classes. If they don't, then they are put in the mainstream, but they have ESL support." Children who don't speak English but are not from a Spanish-speaking country go into mainstream classes with ESL support. All children are given free physicals and dental examinations.

To provide a greater level of support for those children who are non-English-speaking, but whose primary language is neither Spanish nor Creole, Stamford Public Schools also runs a Newcomers Program that helps children from other countries acclimate to life in their new city. In addition to reinforcement of language acquisition education, the program addresses cultural and social education as well. Length of participation in the program averages between six and nine months.

As part of its magnet to attract majority students to attend school at Rogers, the school emphasizes its cultural diversity and is creative and innovative in developing programs and methods to communicate. Social isolation can be a problem in a school where students are speaking different languages. At Rogers, parents volunteer to run workshops in puppeteering and mime. There are also clubs that are open to all students and meet regularly before or after school. Requiring no language, mime provides an opportunity for students with different languages to communicate and interact on equal footing.

Rogers School has also recently instituted a new program, The International Baccalaureate Program (IBP). Funded starting in 2002 by the Comprehensive School Reform grant, IBP brings an umbrella program into the school that encompasses the magnet theme, says Principal Cathy Cummings. "Part of the program is learning a different language," she explains. "We already had a number of the components of IBP, except for the language. One of the greatest benefits that they have seen from this program is, in teaching the [English-speaking] children Spanish, you bring a sense of self-esteem to the children who are already Spanish-speaking, because now they are the ones who know everything. And you are the ones trying to be like *them*. My feeling is nothing breeds success like success. So you have children who now [have the experience of] having their self-esteem built, they are being successful in this academic situation with the language. And [another benefit] is that it has been a bridge to bring in parents, they can utilize the parents to teach the other children. This way, we will be able to bring in some of our community."

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Wilma Sime Roundy Elementary
Columbus Junction, Iowa

The Junction Among Schools, Community and Business

On any given school morning at Roundy, you'll witness a flood of students pouring into the building, all trying to get a morning hug from their principal. It is quite a sight. This spirit permeates throughout the building and leads to strong connections with students, parents, local businesses and community organizations. Roundy embraces education with the same excitement, warmth and compassion, and leaves you knowing there are a lot of really positive things happening in southeastern Iowa.

Columbus Junction, Iowa, is a small town surrounded by expansive cornfields, the sort of community where families sit on the porch and wave hello at the cars driving by—whether they know the driver or not. Pretty houses with gardens and cheery decorative sculptures can be found on the same street as the most modest and unkempt apartment buildings; trailer homes and sprawling ranch houses co-exist in the same neighborhood. There is one motel, one diner and two each convenience stores, banks, auto parts stores and car dealerships. There is also a doctor, a dentist, a chiropractor and a veterinarian.

Unlikely as it may seem, this little hamlet in the heartland has experienced a significant surge in population due to a wave of immigration of Hispanic families. As in many small American towns, Main Street in Columbus Junction died a slow death over the past several decades as store after store closed down. But today it is being reborn with a wave of immigrant-owned businesses, including three Mexican restaurants, a bakery and a dollar store. In fact, one-third of the storefronts in Columbus Junction are now owned and operated by immigrants. Ill-prepared at first, the community has worked hard to adapt to its new identity.

In the very center of this town and indeed, at the center of educating immigrant students, sits Roundy Elementary School, an attractive new building erected in 2000. Made necessary by the vast numbers of new immigrant children, the red brick school today houses 550 students, pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. Fifty-eight percent of students are Hispanic, two percent African American, and 40 percent are white. The school serves five towns, including Fredonia, Columbus City, Cotter, Conesville and Columbus Junction itself.

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Building this new school enabled the junior high school to relocate to the old elementary school, and the high school to take over what formerly housed the junior high. Everyone benefited, not only from the increase in square footage for classrooms, but also from new programming, much geared toward improving life for this burgeoning population of Spanish-speaking immigrants. According to Dan Vogeler, principal at Roundy for the past four years, this was an important part of the school district vision. "We are bringing the Latino culture into our system," he says. "Our vision, with the different cultures we have here, is that we believe that all kids can learn. And I think we are doing a good job at that."

Apparently so. In 2001, the Columbus Junction school district was recognized as an "Outstanding Latino Educational Organization" by the state of Iowa Governor's Commission on Latino Affairs, while Vogeler (whose heritage is German) was named Outstanding Latino Leader for demonstrating superb leadership skills for teachers, students and the community. The awards applaud the efforts of Vogeler and the school district, to get families of different cultures actively involved in school activities. The school was also recently awarded the "State Board of Education Equity Recognition Award, 2002" which recognizes educators' initiatives to make their schools more inclusive, welcoming and supportive learning environments for students from diverse backgrounds. That these efforts are so appreciated at the state capitol is notable: Iowa is rare indeed in its upbeat appreciation of its immigrant population. In fact, the state is currently considering a proposal to become an "immigrant enterprise zone," an attempt to become an attractive destination for families from other countries as an answer to reviving a state devastated during the farm crisis of the 1980s. Among other efforts, the proposal includes seeking an exemption from federal immigration quotas, incentives to help employers recruit employees from other countries, and even a plan to send the governor on the road to make "sales pitches" to people considering relocation to the Hawkeye state.

Historical Perspective

Immigrants are nothing new to Columbus Junction. The town was originally settled by Welsh farmers and has long hosted families of migrant workers who arrived to harvest melons from the sandy fields each spring and summer. There are a few third-generation Latino families in the community, but until lately that was a very small percentage of the town population.

However, what is happening now, in the early part of the 21st century, is that families who have farmed this land for generations are searching for a new means of livelihood in the post-agricultural economy, while new families from Mexico and Central America arrive in droves, ready to write the first chapter of their family history in the new country. Specifically, they come to work in the meat-packing industry, where the hourly wages are significantly higher than anything they could earn in their native country.

By far the largest employer in Columbus Junction today is IBP (formerly Iowa Beef Packers), a division of Tyson Foods, which processes and packages pork products. About a third of the town's 1,900 residents work at the plant—which employs a total of 1,100 "team members" (production workers) and 200 management employees. Eighty-nine percent of these workers are Latino, and by some estimates, as many as one-quarter of those are undocumented. Drawn by wages that seem high and a lifestyle that promises to be

"I came to work here at [Roundy] 15 years ago. And I've seen many changes at the school. I came here as a part-time employee to help two Hispanic children in third grade, and there were only two. The teacher didn't know what to do with these two children who couldn't speak English. So they hired me to come into the classroom and work with them. We sat at a table on the side of the room and tried to participate at whatever level they felt they could that day.

"Of course today we now have many, many Hispanic children. And the whole atmosphere has changed. We're not trying to push English quickly. We're trying to understand Spanish. And we are valuing the Spanish language in their learning. And that is not only happening here at the school, but I think it is also happening in our community. Which is very important, because before people had the attitude, well, you're in America, you need to speak English. And now we have adults taking Spanish classes because they want to communicate. I think we have a long way to go, but we've come a long way.

"I believe the volunteer program has been important to the job of bringing our community together. I have a great story. We have groups of people who have coffee together every morning here in town. I couldn't get any of them to volunteer, so I went to them and we talked about volunteering. And this one gentleman said he had been a teacher, and he said I don't really think it is for me, but I will come up one day for you. So he came, and he has stayed. He is a regular, he puts in two or three days a week, most of the year. He told [the coffee group] that when he came he was convinced that we had students here who didn't want to learn. That they weren't clean, they didn't know English, and that they would not be respectful of him. He said when he left that first day that he knew that none of those things were true. And this is a man who goes to coffee still, every day, with many people in our community, and he is able to tell this story. And I think it is little things like that that are going to open everybody's heart to what's going on here."

—Diane Bohling, Volunteer Coordinator
Roundy Elementary

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bucolic, these workers nonetheless find life in Iowa to be difficult—health care and housing are just two major obstacles for families who settle in the area. Because it is a rural area, there are few organizations people can turn to for help, and those that do exist may be located in neighboring communities, requiring a car to even get there to seek assistance and support.

School of the 21st Century Programming

Roundy, named after a generous local family is, as its name implies, a "well-rounded school" that aims not only to support the development of students and their families, but also to reach out to the community. Therefore, the school works in partnership with local businesses and community-based organizations to provide broad-based opportunity to all children—indeed, to all families. The bilingual education program at the school respects the heritage of native Spanish speakers while teaching children to speak English fluently. There are English classes for adults. The bilingual school staff (even the phone answering system has English and Spanish options) is committed to building relationships with parents and focuses not only on the academic needs of children and families but also their emotional and economic concerns. The school holds parenting workshops, one series of which is in Spanish. And the volunteer program—which under Diane Bohling's and Vogeler's leadership has expanded from ten to more than 140 people—encourages all parents, including immigrants, to volunteer at the school in order to share in the sense of pride and ownership.

Roundy Elementary School provides 21C programs and services and is one of 24 schools participating in an evaluation of the Iowa Early Elementary Program conducted by Matia Finn-Stevenson, Associate Director, The Yale Center in Child Development and Social Policy; and Director, 21C. Like other Iowa schools that adhere to the community school model, Roundy receives funding from the State Department of Education. It also receives 21st Century Community Learning Center (21CCLC) monies. The building is open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Friday. It offers a wide range of activities and programming to support all families in its catchment area and functions as a "community center" for the neighborhood.

Supporting Families

Ultimately, the success of any school in meeting its goals—academic and otherwise—is based on the efforts of the people who work there. This is very much the case in Columbus Junction, where it is clear that the entire school buys into the school's mission to help every child learn and understands that parental involvement is a key factor in meeting that goal.

Every communique from the school is sent home in Spanish and English. In addition to having a bilingual classroom at every grade level, the school employs "bilingual associates" who help out in the classroom and translate at parent-teacher conferences. "We [have] about 98 to 100 percent parent-teacher conference participation," says Dan Vogeler. "That's almost unheard of, especially in a district of our size and with our population." Vogeler says that most people who work at the school would say "the coolest thing about Roundy is the ability to work with the Hispanic culture. [Our] district does things differently. And, yes, it can be a challenge, but by doing all the extra little things.

21C Programs Include:

Celebrate Families Workshop on parenting, including a series in Spanish, offered in collaboration with the University of Iowa Extension.

English Classes for adults, on three different ability levels.

21 CCLC After-School Program for 187 school age children, including activities, field trips and homework tutoring.

Community Partnerships with a range of organizations, including Muscatine Art Center (art programming), Louisa County Conservation Board (natural and Iowa history activities) and Iowa Children's Museum (dramatic presentations), provide cultural experience and community involvement for students.

Adult Education, in collaboration with Muscatine Community College. Course offerings include computer skills, GED, cooking classes, financial planning and others.

Preschool, with four full-day or two full-day options, so that every child between the ages of three and five who lives in the community has the opportunity to attend preschool. Home visits, parenting classes and five to six parent nights a year are part of the preschool curriculum.

Meeting Space for several organizations, including Girl Scouts, Daisies, Cub Scouts and the 4-H Club.

Family Night Activities, a monthly event encouraging family participation and involvement in school programming.

The Colonel Kids Daycare Center, located in a stand-alone building about a mile from the school and funded in collaboration with Kentucky Fried Chicken, a local businessman and IBP. One preschool classroom is also housed at this location, which provides the community's first center-based child care for infants and toddlers.

Informal Support for other community-based programs, on an as-needed basis. For instance, the Roundy School van was used to transport women to the Stork's Nest Program for maternal and child health.

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the feedback that we get from parents is very positive. They know what is going on in the school."

A major initiative of Vogeler's has been to increase parental involvement through a volunteer program. Funded by a 21CCLC grant, Vogeler hired a volunteer coordinator—Diane Bohling—and charged her with bringing volunteers from the community into the school. Not only has community acceptance of the immigrant population increased as a direct result of the expansion of the program ("If they are coming here and working with these kids, we are breaking down attitudes," says Bohling), but the Hispanic parents themselves have become committed volunteers. "This year, for the first time, I am beginning to see some real leadership from the Hispanic community, trying to work within the system we have here in Columbus Junction," says Bohling. "All these activities bring our families together. The 21CCLC grant is a grant that brings families and community and school together. And for us here at Roundy, having a principal who really felt that volunteering was important [made a difference]. Because it has given our community a broader view of what the potential is and what the strengths are in diversity."

The change in parental involvement is notable. When he first came to Roundy four years ago, Vogeler said that on parents night the first year, of the 75 people who showed up, only about five were Hispanic. "Now it is probably the other way around—most of the time, with our minority population being at about 60 percent, it is usual that we have 60 percent of the people who show up are Hispanic and Black, and the other 40 percent are Anglo families. So our efforts to reach out have paid off. It hasn't been easy. But I think that now, about 99 percent of the families feel very comfortable

"My concern as a mother in a family is that ... I have four children and sometimes I can't help my children very much. I feel I don't have enough time, and I worry that they might feel that I don't support them

"I go to school to study English. My husband doesn't have a certain time when he gets home, it depends on the work. He works many hours. So I prepare dinner ahead of time, and when he arrives, I go to my English lessons three or four times a week, and while I am at my English class, my husband takes care of my kids. It is very difficult sometimes, because they're little. And he is tired from work. There are times when he tells me, don't go, I'm very tired. But I say, it doesn't matter. You have to be with the kids, I need to learn the language. Because when I go to the doctor, or I take the kids to the dentist, or whatever, they don't have bilingual people there. And all of a sudden, I wonder, what did they tell me? I don't understand. I tell him, if I don't learn English then you will have to leave work so you can take the kids and then it is the same—one loses—and if he loses work hours, it is less money for the house and the less we can afford with his salary.

"My husband works at IBP. It is very hard work, because there are times that he gets home really tired, hurting all over, the boxes are heavy and he has to carry them. So sometimes he doesn't want to do anything, and I understand, because he works from 6:30 to 7:30, sometimes 8 at night. I sometimes tell him, leave that job, it is not good for you to be at IBP. Yes, it is a paid job and he makes good money but he says, if I go somewhere else, it will be too far. There are other work opportunities around, but they are far from here and IBP is the only one that is close by. He says, why would I go to work so far, if I have this job here? And I say, but it is hard. And he says, Because if I do this job, we can eat. There is no need for you to work. With what I make, we have enough for everything. And yes, it is true, IBP is hard, but it gives enough to the worker.

"What I feel for Roundy, for Roundy School, I don't know how to say it! Sincerely I am very grateful to them. I would never know how to repay them. Because the people there—everybody—from the principal, the secretaries, all the workers, all the teachers, everybody looks at you and ... hi, and how are you, and everybody says hello to you very nicely. They make you feel as though you were part of their own family. So I wouldn't even have the words to thank them, and how to repay them.

"For me, Mrs. Buendia is someone that has completely changed my life. Because if I had come here, to this community, and I hadn't found her, I think that I wouldn't have gotten to ... I wouldn't be who I am now. Because she has supported me on everything—everything, everything, everything. With my children, personally—on everything. I didn't know how to drive when I arrived and I was pregnant and she used to go with me to the doctor. I would call her and say, Mrs. Buendia, I need you to do me a favor. Come with me to this place, or help me. If my kids sometimes have a problem, I call her and say, Mrs. Buendia, I need your help. It's Elizabeth or Eddie, and they have this problem.

"Don't worry Maria, we'll see how to solve it. And I think that she is a person that is very ... she really deserves the position that she has, and the trust of the principal. Like the principal says, she is his right arm. It is the truth.

"If Mrs. Buendia weren't ... If they ... I have thought about ... what if she moved? Because I know they have cut the budget for the social worker a lot. I feel that, sometimes I think, Where are we going to go? Because she is a person who is very important to the school, and above all, for the families. She communicates with all of us, the families that have children in the school. I think it would be very unfair if they took her away from us! It would be taking ... I don't know, some part of our life from us."

—Maria Ayala, Parent
Roundy Elementary

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coming to Roundy Elementary. They come here for help, no matter what the problem is. And I think that is important." Roundy also used 21CCLC funds to sponsor a program called Community Voices, which introduced community leaders to workers, providing education on health care, insurance benefits, home financing and other tools of life.

The hands-on responsibility for providing much of that help belongs to a woman named Georgina Buendia-Cruz, hired three years ago with Iowa-funded K3 Innovative grant money in the position of Family Services Coordinator. It is a catch-all sort of job—there is confusion among the people who work with her as to her title, with some calling her the "at-risk coordinator," others referring to her as "the family contact person," but everyone is very clear about what she does. Though she lives an hour away in Iowa City, Buendia-Cruz has become the official "go to" person in Columbus Junction for any immigrant family with kids in the school and a problem in their life.

According to Vogeler, Buendia-Cruz's official job description is "working with families, to have them become better parents. We have a lot of parenting classes that she works with. She makes sure we work very closely with families on attendance. And then the other thing she works with is [families and their] health issues. Because in order for kids to be successful, they have to be healthy."

"If you look at our attendance now, 95 percent of our kids are here—and in our top two classes, attendance this year is running at 98 percent," he reports. Vogeler cites other examples of the sort of intervention Buendia-Cruz provides: "We got a phone call one morning from somebody who said we should know that a particular parent was leaving their kids at home alone. This parent worked a second shift. By law, we would be required to turn that [information] in. But before we did that, Georgina and I made a home visit to this mother. Yes, it was true. We worked with this mother, starting at about 9 a.m. that morning. By 3 p.m., we had found babysitting services for her. So it was nice. We had helped with two things—one, the mother didn't have to quit her job, and second, we didn't have to turn her into DHS.

"Then, last year, we had a family that arrived from Minnesota, and all they had with them was Minnesota food stamps. They thought they could use them here. They had no other money whatsoever. So [Georgina] spent two days getting resources to help them get established. And this happens quite frequently."

Another important position is that of 21st Century Site Coordinator. Although there has been turnover in the job, which is problematic, it is currently filled by a young man named Seth Wenger, who has both a personal and professional commitment to helping families assimilate into the unfamiliar community. His personal background included a period as a foreign exchange student in Venezuela, where he learned how it felt to be an outsider. "I had a lot of experiences where I wanted to learn things, and people would say to me, let's go, I will help you with this. But it just never happened. When I came home, I thought about all that I had accomplished … [but also] these things that I had the opportunity to do, and didn't do."

According to Principal Dan Vogeler, Buendia-Cruz's efforts are quantifiable and integral to the success of the school:

"[For example] Our attendance rates were not very good. At times, as many as 15 percent of our kids were gone on any one day. A lot of the reason was, a lot of those kids would have to go to doctors or to lawyer with the family because they could speak English and do the interpreting. Also, sometimes with [parents] going to work at 6 a.m., the alarm wouldn't go off for the kids—or it would, but the kids would decide not to go to school that day. So I felt it was very important that we have a family contact person—especially one who is bilingual, who could work with the Anglo families and with the Hispanic families."

Wenger says, "When I came to this community, I am trying to keep that in mind constantly. That part of it is, the people in this community want to do something positive, and want to learn something—but they need somebody to maybe show them how to do it. So that is important to me. I try to be consistent in following through when somebody wants my help."

As the elementary Site Coordinator for the 21CCLC, Wenger runs the after-school program and also organizes special events, like the school's monthly "Family Nights." "I want to be able to affect the whole family because I think that if the family can stay strong and be a part of the community, then the kids are going to grow up and [want to stay there and be positive contributors to the community.] If we can show these kids and families that this is a good place to be, and there is opportunity, then hopefully we can keep them interested and excited about staying here."

Wenger organizes community partnerships with groups such as Muscatine Community College and the Iowa Children's Museum, from Iowa City. He also solicits grant money from various sources, including the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs. "State cultural and arts funding has been easy to get in the State of Iowa, but there is some talk about possibly cutting that—which would be a disaster. Right now we don't have to worry about that, but we have only one more year left, so we will be looking at that as an issue," he says.

His goal is to bring arts programming to the families of Columbus Junction, in a way that is relevant to their experience. His plan for the summer 2002 program, for instance, included a mural and dramatic presentation on the theme that "everybody here is an immigrant from somewhere. The idea is to bring that back into the eye of the public that this new wave of immigration is nothing new, and nothing bad or scary, nothing different. It is about people looking for a good place to live. And if people really believe that Columbus

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Junction is a good place to live, then we shouldn't have any problems."

Language Acquisition Education

Roundy Elementary School has a bilingual classroom at every grade level, and a staff of paraprofessionals who provide additional support to the children who have moved on to join the regular classroom. There are also three ESL teachers in the school. For children who begin in the preschool or kindergarten at Roundy, the goal is to move into an English-speaking classroom by the middle of third grade (or within three years of coming to the United States).

In addition to its formal program, the school emphasizes belonging, for all its students and faculty. Many of the staff—teaching and support alike—have learned to speak Spanish in order to better communicate with the community's new members. In Linda McKeller's bilingual third grade classroom, while 17 of the 19 children speak Spanish as their first language, two English-speakers are there by parental choice. McKeller has chosen to "loop" (remain with her students for two years in order to provide a consistent relationship) and her classroom emphasis is on "community." "I find that by the second year with me, regardless of where they started, most kids are speaking English in the classroom primarily," says McKeller. As part of the curriculum, each class makes a quilt and quilting is thematically tied into the curriculum, with lessons on measuring, math, patterns, reading and planning tied to the activity. Language is a fluid concept under McKeller's tutelage. She slips easily back and forth between English and Spanish, and encourages her students to make connections in both languages. When she summarizes a science lesson on magnets in Spanish, she repeats it in English for the two non-Hispanic students—and everyone in the classroom benefits from the repetition.

Focal Points: The Heart of the Community

- Roundy's notable success in reducing truancy and tardiness, and in helping families to solve problems with child care, get medical services, and even find jobs, provides evidence of the efficacy of funding family-support positions, such as that held by Mrs. Buendia-Cruz.
- To support them in becoming self-sufficient and productive in a new community, it is imperative to not only give new immigrants a voice in local affairs, but also the tools for learning to use it effectively. This community's commitment to leadership development, in the form of its "Voices" program sponsored by Roundy's 21CCLC, is an important initiative.

Community, Business and the Workforce

Anyone who lives in or near Columbus Junction understands the importance of IBP in the equation determining whether the town is a "good place to live," or not. It comes down to two issues: employment and tax revenue (IBP is the largest employer). It is also widely understood, however, that the nature of the work at IBP is difficult and unpleasant, and that the working conditions are unfavorable. IBP is supportive of the community, in general, and of Roundy Elementary and its programs, in particular. So when discussing the company, people tend to choose their words very carefully. "IBP has been very supportive of our school," says Dan Vogeler. "They've given money for our playground. They gave a huge amount for our new child care center downtown. They send volunteers up on their time. Anytime we have a cookout or need some meat, they are willing to donate. So I think we have a good partnership."

There are numerous aspects to that partnership. In addition to the direct financial connection between IBP and Roundy, the company also enables some of its management employees to volunteer at the school during work hours, and provides space for school officials to meet with parents once a month during the lunch hour. "We found that these parents, working 10 or 12 hours a day, may not get home until after 6 p.m. at night," says Vogeler. "Which means they really didn't have a chance to talk with the school personnel. So what we did, we started going down, we set up a date and try to do it once a month. They set up a table for us, right where the workers come and go to lunch. And we usually have … I'd say, 25 to 30 people who stop in to say hi, if nothing else. But we also talk about academics, discipline. And Georgina comes with us, so there will be some times when they want to know about where they can go to get a certain service."

IBP also offers a number of other support services to its immigrant workers, including a "Buddy System" which provides every new "team member" with an experienced worker as a partner. And IBP provides tuition reimbursement for GED or ESL classes and citizenship reimbursement. "We do these things because they help the plant by keeping our employees happy, and reducing the turnover in our facility," says Eva Garcia, whose official title is Community Liaison, IBP. "Our goal is to make sure our employees are happy, and that they are well-acclimated into the community."

There are other employment opportunities in the area, but not within Columbus Junction itself. West Liberty Foods and Heinz are two food-service companies that employ large numbers of immigrants. According to Roza Mendoza, Executive Director, Diversity Service Center, in nearby Muscatine, Iowa, the issues immigrants face in the workplace tend to be similar, regardless of the employer. "It is very difficult for the new immigrant," she says. "There are many families where the parents have two jobs. They finish one eight-hour job, go home and rest for two or three hours,

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"I am from Mexico. I work in the slaughterhouse [at IBP] stacking boxes. I got four kids. Where I used to live, I was making only about six dollars an hour. That was impossible to support my family. That's why I move to this state. I am working by myself so my wife doesn't work, and I can hold ... I am supporting the house. It makes me feel good because my wife is taking care of my kids."

"I start to work at 6:30. I work about 11 hours per day. The job I do is hard, it is cold in the place where I work. You got to wear a jacket, two jackets, because it is a freezer. And there is a big line, all in boxes. All day long, out of boxes, I have to get them, grab them and stack them on pallets. Right now, I have no dreams for myself. I think we have everything right now. I've got dreams for my family. To feel American, feel free. To buy a house. I want my children to have their own room. That's what I want right now. When I get my house, I will think about something else. And I think I will get it. It is not too hard, in this state, this country, in this little town. If you are working you can do it."

"Iowa is a nice place, especially for kids to grow up. If you live in small towns, things are better than in big cities. When we came to this town, we got a lot of help from school. Especially Georgina, she helped us a lot. Because when we got here, my wife was pregnant. I was at work. And you know, the pregnant woman has to go to an appointment once a month. She was taking my wife to the doctor, and a lot of other things—at Christmas, she gets a lot of gifts for my kids."

—Jose Ayala, Parent
Roundy Elementary

and then they are off again to go to their second job. We see that the employers are becoming more aware, being more cooperative. We are trying to work with the employers and make them more aware of the issues, to provide some diversity training."

In addition to employer support, Proteus Inc. and the South East Community Action Program (SECAP) are two organizations that fill "basic need" gaps for immigrant families in the Columbus Junction area. Proteus Inc. serves primarily the immigrant community and facilitates national farm worker, migrant health, employment outreach, housing, nutrition and immunization programs. Whereas Proteus focuses its efforts on migrant issues, SECAP's mission is "to help families and individuals in need achieve self-sufficiency and improve their quality of life." SECAP accomplishes this by providing child care resource and referral information, transportation, energy and food assistance, workforce development opportunities and clothing vouchers. Both agencies work closely with Roundy's family contact person, which ensures that families have direct access to all of these resources.

CHALLENGES

Continuity of Funding. Grant funding supports much of what is innovative and successful at Roundy, and therefore leaves open the question of where the money is to come from in the future. "Right now we don't have to worry because we have a large enough budget to fund what we need to do," says Seth Wenger, Site Coordinator, 21C Community Learning Center. "But we have only got one more year left, so we will have to be looking at that."

Staff Turnover. With so few employment opportunities outside the school district and IBP, it is difficult to attract and retain qualified staff other than those who've lived in the area a long time. The after-school program, in particular, has suffered from inconsistent leadership. "That may be partly because we are funded by grant money, and we didn't know [what we would need]," says Wenger. "We have had a lot of staff turnover in the last three years."

Housing/Working Conditions. Parents are stretched to their limits trying to work and care for their families. Immigrants coming to Iowa in search of an easier, better life still struggle to meet the most basic needs of their families. The pay scale is higher at IBP than any work available to them in their home countries ("They've never seen this much money; to a lot of our families from Mexico, working at IBP or another job for $8 or $9 an hour is almost like being a millionaire," says Dan Vogeler). However, the workday can be 11 to 12 hours long, the plant is ice cold and management makes many demands of employees.

Barriers to Achievement. "When families get there, if they have high school kids, the number one thing they want to do is learn English—and then go to work at IBP," says Vogeler. "We try to get across to them that you need that high school diploma, and then you need to go on, to trade school or college—I think we are making some progress with it, but one of the negative things is, we have the highest dropout rate in Iowa."

Precariousness of Economy. The future of Columbus Junction is tied to the future of IBP in the community; if the plant left, the town would face financial disaster. There is concern that the typical life cycle of the factory equipment—about 10 years, which is coming up—may necessitate further investment or closure.

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Summary and Conclusions

The national trends we noted earlier in the report—high, sustained flows of immigration to the United States, the fact that many of the immigrants move to communities that have no recent experience with immigration, and growing numbers of undocumented immigrants—are reflected in the four communities we studied. Indeed, our study shows in microcosm the changing demographic landscape, indicating that in some communities, average national statistics pale in comparison to what is happening at the local level. Whereas nationally, one out of five students is foreign-born or has parents who are recent immigrants, in some of the communities we studied, more than 50 percent of the student body, or one out of every two students, fits this description.

These trends are expected to continue. Looking ahead, it is projected that the number of immigrants will rise during this decade, from 31.1 million legal immigrants in the 2000 Census to 40 million in 2010. There will continue to be, in addition, an influx of undocumented immigrants whose numbers during the 1990s more than doubled and whose presence in all four of the communities we studied was prevalent.

Recent immigrants are not a homogeneous group. They represent an incredible diversity in national background and there are also differences among them in education and income status. While many immigrant families are successful, some communities have large groups of immigrants who do not speak English and have little, if any, education, factors that are highly correlated with poverty and associated hardships.*

Immigration trends have profound implications for schools, especially now that educators are faced with having to implement the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002. The purpose of NCLB is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal and significant opportunity to obtain a high quality education. Various provisions are included in NCLB as the means by which to accomplish this purpose, such as increased student assessments in math, reading and other subject areas for all children, including those with limited English. Schools will be penalized if they show no improvements in student test scores and graduation rates. Another provision is for schools to encourage and sustain parent involvement, especially with regards to enabling parents to make choices about their children's educational programs. Reaching out to parents who cannot speak English is difficult, as educators in our study point out. NCLB also calls for increased staff qualifications that extend to paraprofessionals who, in many schools, provide individual attention to immigrant students and parents. For schools with large numbers of immigrant students who are not only from low-income families but also have limited English skills, the difficulties presented by NCLB are enormous.

Our study began prior to the enactment of NCLB and it showed that even in the absence of the NCLB requirements, at the time of the study, the schools were struggling with addressing the many and varied needs of immigrant students. These needs extend beyond education and language instruction, and include attention to parents, providing them with assistance on issues related to housing, health and social services, as well as well as help with learning English and new customs.

From a policy perspective, we lag far behind in enabling schools to cope with the demographic changes brought about by recent immigration trends. Nevertheless, the schools participating in the study have accommodated to the changes, making it clear that schools can and do respond to the needs of their students and meet the challenges before them. In this concluding section of the report, several of our findings are worthy of emphasis.

A Community-Wide Issue

One such finding is that immigration affects the entire community. Labor shortages are at the crux of the issue as immigrants move to where there are jobs, and businesses, sometimes with the support of state policymakers, seek immigrant workers. While this fills the need for labor and stimulates the economy, it also transforms the community, requiring schools and organizations to address the needs of newly arrived children and families. All four of the communities participating in the study experienced vast changes brought about by the recent increase in immigrant labor. However, circumstances and various factors in the community vary from place to place. In Green Bay, Wisconsin, for example, municipal and business leaders are supportive of the immigrant population: City employees are studying Spanish so they can better communicate with and relate to the growing Latino population and several local businesses have joined forces in order to seek ways to help new immigrant workers become better educated. Within this supportive climate, the school has been able to work with others in the community to implement various programs and support services. In Columbus Junction, Iowa, there is only one major employer. Collaborations between the elementary school and this local business—an IBP meat packing plant—have been initiated by school administrators. One of the

*Urban Institute (2001). Los Angeles, New York City Immigrant Survey (LANYCIS). Washington, DC: Author.

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outcomes of this collaboration is that the IBP workers volunteer in school activities and the plant has opened its doors to educators, so they can regularly meet with parents at their workplace, thus encouraging parental involvement and awareness of school functions. The owner of a supermarket in Stamford, Connecticut, employs immigrants and regularly helps the school, supporting not only his employees' children, but others in the school as well.

However, the situation is very different in Leadville, Colorado, since new immigrants live in the town but work elsewhere. With parents commuting long hours to work, they have less time to spend in school. The immigrant population in Leadville is also transient, moving in and out of the community during the school year, creating disruptions in the children's education. There is animosity toward the new immigrants and concern that since they work out of town, they do not contribute to the local economy. Employers are not close by and, as yet, have limited involvement with the school district. In the face of this rather bleak situation, educators are nonetheless hopeful that they have some leverage—affordable housing for workers—with which they can approach the businesses that depend on immigrant labor and try to forge a partnership. If they are successful and able to collaborate with businesses, it would ease the burden the school and community-based organizations now assume in addressing the needs of immigrant students and their parents.

Exemplary Practices

The differences among the communities extend to the programs and services provided, as educators and others address unique needs that confront them. We were impressed with the range of support services the schools and organizations are implementing and with the creativity with which they are addressing the educational, health and social needs of young children who are new to this country and unable to speak the language. Clearly, each school has its own story and each has developed its own programmatic approach in working with students and their families. Notable in all cases are the changes that were made and the positive impact on the daily lives of students, parents, teachers and the community. Several practices stand out and while they have been implemented differently within these four schools, they serve as lessons for other schools across the country also dealing with demographic changes brought about by immigration.

Educational Leadership and School-Wide Commitment. The principal's leadership stands out as a key factor in the school's ability to effectively address the needs of all students, including those who are from immigrant families. The superintendent's support is an essential prerequisite, but the day-to-day leadership at the school building level sets the tone, encourages teachers and provides the direction for the development of programs. This is not a unique finding. The crucial role of the principal is noted as one of the key factors in successful implementation of school reform initiatives and the development of community schools, such as 21C, that provide not only educational programs but also family support services.[7] Leadership influence at the building level is evident in a school-wide commitment to addressing the needs of all children as teachers and other staff members rally around the principal's message and direction. The schools in this study have been successful in a large part because the principals are involved in addressing the needs of the students, doing whatever needs to be done, from going with some of the staff to the workplace or to a child's home, to garnering various grant funds for the development of programs.

Forging Partnerships. Teamwork and partnerships with local businesses and community-based organizations are other effective practices evident in the four schools. The needs are so vast and resources so limited that no one school, nor any one organization, can work alone. Schools that reach out to and engage community partners plug into many untapped resources, whether it is literacy volunteers or after-school programming or refreshments for various school functions. Working in partnerships with others in the community is effective not only because this can help leverage programs, services and other resources, but also because it increases the community's awareness of the school and also reduces the burden on educators, whose ultimate task is to ensure the students' academic success. We didn't find any magical approach here, just plain hard work with the principals, teachers and other staff simply going out to the community, meeting people in the workplace, in organizations, city hall, and even in the local diner, as was the case in one of the sites that was successful in getting individuals to help out as volunteers.

Supporting Families, Beginning in the Early Years. Educators in the study sites are cognizant of their mission—to educate children—but also aware that if they are to succeed, they need to address the children's academic and non-academic needs as well as provide support services to the entire family. All four schools provide support services, not only during the school-age years, but also during preschool, with Head Start, child care and various health and other services. The benefits of this dual approach—provision of academic and non-academic support beginning even before the children enter school—are evident in numerous studies that show that all children, but especially those who are at risk for educational failure, come to school

[7] Zigler, E., & Finn-Stevenson, M. (in press). The School of the 21st Century. In R. Sternberg (ed.) Research and Practice in School Reform.

[8] Barnett, W. S.; Hustedt, J. T. (2003). Preschool: The most important grade. Educational Leadership, 60, 7, 54-57.

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more ready to learn if they participate in such programs.[8] The schools also created opportunities for involvement in ways that are meaningful to the parents and, in turn, parents play a more active role in their children's education. This happens by way of school-based English classes for parents, the provision of social services or the appointment of a family liaison, where a staff member is dedicated to keeping in touch with parents and ensuring that their needs are met. By showing that they care not only about academic achievement, but also about where and how the family lives and whether the children and family have enough to eat and access to health care, these schools have earned the trust of parents and have succeeded in making them a more integral part of the education process.

Confronting Challenges

Success comes at a price, notably very hard work on the part of educators and others in the community. There are also challenges, which vary from place to place although several common problems were documented in the course of the study. An understanding of some of the problems faced at the local level is an important first step to developing policies that would address these, as no society acts until it has a sense of the problem.

Financial Issues. Lack of funding and the financial implications of increased immigration were mentioned in all four schools as major obstacles to ensuring that all children, including those from immigrant families, succeed academically. Schools have to comply with the Equal Educational Opportunities Act, which indicates that no state shall deny equal educational opportunity to an individual on account of his or her race, color, sex or national origin. In addition, schools must take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by students in instructional programs. Although some support, such as funds through Title I, is available, this federal mandate nonetheless saddles the costs of meeting the law's requirements upon the local school district.

Also at issue is the fact that the demographic makeup of a school's population can change dramatically from year to year, so schools are often unaware of what, if any, additional resources will be needed. Furthermore, school budgets, typically adopted in the summer preceding the start of the school year, leave very little room for additional expenses related to an increase in the immigrant population. In one of the communities we studied, labor needs dictate when immigrants arrive and enroll their children in school, which is often after the school year begins and budgets are set.

At present, school budgets are primarily derived from property or local income tax revenues, a system that is outdated and fraught with inequities. Low-income school districts cannot prepare for a sudden change in demographics that businesses and economic growth may bring. Clearly, businesses must be at the table with educational and community partners to help them cope with the shift in demographics and the impact it has on the local community.

Meeting Children's Basic Needs. Other problems schools face stem from having to meet children's and parents' basic needs, which take precedence if the children are to succeed academically. Many factors contribute to the stability of a family, from employment to housing to education and health. Families that emigrate for better opportunities in the United States experience stressful life events and are in need of stability just as many other families who are in poverty. Their ability to cope and adjust to changes in their lives is dependent on supportive programs, as is the case with all families experiencing stress.

Historically, immigrant labor has been used in various industries, according to the labor needs of a particular time. Between 1942 and 1964, millions of Mexicans were brought into the United States under the Bracero Program to work temporarily on contract to United States growers and ranchers.[9] Since then, immigrant labor has been synonymous with agriculture. With such a large number of laborers legally in the United States for agricultural purposes, the federal government has been providing monies to support this population of migrant farm workers, under the migrant education provisions in Title I, Section C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Although this federal support is restricted to migrant farm workers and their children, today's immigrants are coming to this country not only for agricultural purposes, but also to bridge gaps in unskilled labor such as construction, landscaping, child care, housekeeping and dishwashing. However, current policy is not in keeping with recent changes in employment trends and does not include support for workers outside the traditional agriculture paradigm.

Also of significance is that the immigrant family, although the parents work, remains in poverty, often lacking basic necessities such as housing. Inadequate housing for immigrants is an issue that we found in all the communities we studied, whether urban or rural. Many families, unable to afford single-family housing, often pool their resources and occupy small apartments or homes with multiple families or are forced to move when they cannot come up with the rent. Sometimes extended families live together in one home, but other times families live with acquaintances. Immigrant children and families living under these conditions don't have adequate space to sleep much less to do their homework, which makes it a very difficult place for a child to thrive and concentrate on school. With parents working multiple jobs or late night shifts, children are often left without appropriate supervision, lacking the attention and

[9] Herrera-Sobek, L. (1979). The Bracero Experience. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA.

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input of the people who have the most influence on their development and safety. These living conditions present obstacles to learning and are exacerbated by other problems such as limited English language skills.

Lack of health care for immigrants is another problem common in all the communities we studied. When minor illnesses remain untreated and hearing and vision impairments go unnoticed, children are unable to learn. Immigrants, especially those who are undocumented, are unlikely to receive health care benefits and do not have access to health care. Students who are undocumented are also ineligible to participate in low-income medical insurance programs. These circumstances create an environment where illnesses go undetected or untreated, families incur enormous bills, communities absorb high costs of unpaid health care, and children suffer.

These are just several of the problems common in all the schools and communities studied. There are others, indicated in the preceding pages. The study documents the hardships faced by schools and illustrates that in our work toward solutions to the problems, we must involve not only the public and philanthropic sectors, but the business community as well. This is an urgent matter. At stake is the education and eventual success of increasing numbers of children who will make up the future workforce in the United States.

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